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## NINETEENTH CENTURY TEACHERS





NINETEENTH CENTURY  
TEACHERS

AND OTHER ESSAYS

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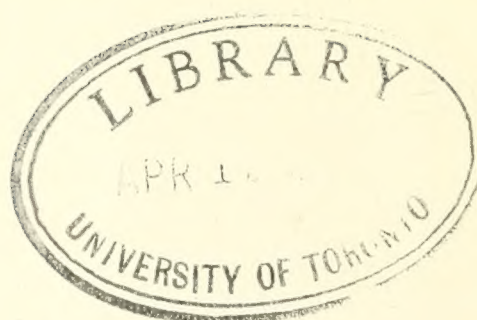
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## INTRODUCTION

THE following Essays were published at different times and in different periodicals, the longer ones mostly in the *Contemporary Review*, the shorter in the *Spectator* newspaper, and one an address to Female Students, on p. 387, has not previously been published at all. They represent the thoughts and convictions of about thirty years—convictions illustrated by varying circumstances and experiences, but themselves unchanged except so far as time has deepened and expanded them. The book has therefore a certain unity, whatever that may be worth. I am not responsible for its appearance, but have felt justified in acceding to the request (at first arousing some hesitation) of a reader and writer whose judgment is so worthy of confidence as Dr. Robertson Nicoll. The reperusal of these half-forgotten productions has convinced me that they are the best I have to give any one who cares to receive from me. Attention is solicited for their dates. Their publication spreads over a period of much and rapid change, and some references and illustrations would ill fit the date of their republication. The value of all periodical literature must be largely historical—what follows here specially so—for its comments, so far as they have any value, illustrate a great revolution of thought. They began in the twilight of one orthodoxy, they follow another from its dawn to its noon, and somewhat beyond it. They ought to afford a picture of that movement by which the English mind has passed in all ultimate convictions from an attitude of contented or

indifferent acquiescence to one of denial, and then again through a stage of doubt to a readiness to receive new truths allied with that which has been rejected. If studies of the men and manners of such a time give no aid in representing and to some extent explaining such a process it must be the fault of the author.

I fear the reader of the book may find some repetition in it. Such a defect is inevitable if periodical essays are to be republished as they were at first written. It will be found, I hope, a counterbalancing advantage that each may be read as a whole in itself, reflecting some shade of belief characteristic of a particular time; while the series illustrates, even by its mistakes, those aspects of truth which in their succession and inheritance make up what we know as the spiritual side of the doctrine of Evolution.

*February 1909.*



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## SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

No member of that brilliant constellation which made England illustrious at the opening of the nineteenth century is more worthy of contemplation than Coleridge. The names of Scott, Byron, and Shelley call up a more romantic and attractive background, while that of Wordsworth marks a more dignified and continuous career. The biography of Coleridge could not become a classic like that of the first named of these poets, it could not even take, in popular and literary interest, the much lower place we must accord to that of the second, and his fame could no more form the foundation of such a cult as that which attaches to the third, than it could court the rigid scrutiny which brings out the spotlessness of the last. Nevertheless, looking back on the group as a whole, we see him, in some respects, the most remarkable of any. Indeed some of that brilliancy in which they excel him is indirectly due to his rays. We cannot read certain passages in the *Excursion* without catching echoes of Kant, and Wordsworth must have received these through Coleridge; we cannot read the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* without thinking of *Christabel*, and *Christabel* was written and seen by Scott before the *Lay* was published. These are striking instances of a stimulating influence unquestionably exercised by Coleridge on his contemporaries independently of his literary bequest to posterity. He was a poet, and he was also a thinker. We need look no further than to a group including Keats and Scott to see that a poet is not necessarily a thinker. As we have from them immortal verse in which the poetic rays transcend the thought-rays, so in Coleridge we reach the other end of the spectrum; the thought



element transcends the poetic expression, and claims independent attention. If he had never written a line of poetry, his prose, and even more the record of his influence in all important memoirs of his time, would establish his claim to a high position among those whose thoughts have passed into the sap which circulates in a national life. There are not many men in the whole history of literature of whom we can say as much.

We may hope shortly for aid from fresh material in our apprehension of a mind so worthy of study. But, as Mr. Morley remarked on the eve of Sir George Trevelyan's biography of Macaulay, the period just preceding any biography which strongly stimulates public interest is one specially fitted for taking stock of our previous knowledge of its subject. Before we add new data to our impressions of a great man it is well to gather up all which are already familiar. We invite our readers, therefore, to prepare for a perusal of the eagerly expected edition of *Coleridge's Letters* from the hand of his grandson by a review of the wealth already at their disposal. It would be impossible, we believe, to collect a larger amount of opinion and reminiscence bearing on almost any life, than that which lies ready to hand for this purpose,<sup>1</sup> and what is new will be studied with more profit and more interest if we prepare its background by a backward glance on what is old. Our special object now is to bring his literary achievement into connection with his personal history and character, and to gather up the teaching involved both in what he did and what he failed to do. In the life of genius we may read, writ large, many of the lessons that lie hidden in other lives. To detach this element from the biography and the work of Coleridge is the aim of the following essay.

He lived a little more than sixty years, and we may, on

<sup>1</sup> It is not my intention to give references, but I may mention that by far the most interesting Life of Coleridge known to me—that by Professor Brandl of Strasburg—can unfortunately not be judged by its English translation. It is written in German which again and again leads the reader to fancy himself reading French, and should be studied by every Englishman who cares for the history of his country and century and is not confined to his own language. [Professor Brandl is now (1908) at Berlin.]

a broad view, divide that period between the two divisions of his literary activity. He edited the *Watchman* and wrote some newspaper articles sufficiently important, it is said, to rouse the hostility of Napoleon, before his thirtieth year; while a few beautiful lines date later. But on the whole his poetry belongs to his youth, and his prose, as those readers of to-day know it who know it at all, to what we must call his old age. This correspondence between the character and the date of his productions seems more natural at first than at last. His prose writings are all introductions to some fuller exposition of his philosophy; and while *they* look to the future, most of his finest verse owes its peculiar beauty, in our opinion, to the pathos of a half-suggested past. The poetry which would have entitled him, had he died at the age of Keats, to Wordsworth's description of Chatterton, 'the marvellous boy'—a description, it has been truly said, far more applicable to Keats—has always something autumnal in its tone. Hardly any other poet, equally well known, ever made so little use of his genius. We can recall only the fame of Gray as one equally secure above the rising waters of oblivion and yet attaching to as minute a production. Two tiny octavos would contain all that is in the full sense original to him, and that posterity will care to remember; and the verse which makes up this minute legacy is not only scanty, its several parts are also incomplete. The *Ancient Mariner* is the only important poem by him which is neither a mere self-utterance, nor a fragment. It may seem a poor thing to estimate the production of a poet by mere bulk, as if we were dealing with bales of cotton, but there is such a thing as exquisite poetry of which there is hardly enough to entitle the writer to the name of poet. We should scarcely apply the word to the author either of the most perfect elegy in the language—the *Burial of Sir John Moore*; or of one of its most perfect sonnets—that of Blanco White's on *Night and Death*. To have expressed noble thought in poetic form does not make a poet, unless there be enough of the production to show, as it were, that the power lay within the man and not without,



that it was not the result of some tragic situation throwing its shadow on a mind specially prepared for sympathy with all that it involves, or of some profound thought winning a sudden splendour from its sacramental reflection on the world of Nature, but a real creation, a summons from the world of the unseen by that magic, of which, we cannot but think Shakespeare intended Prospero's wand to symbolise his own mastery. A certain variety of form is needed to establish this, and as no one short poem can prove its author to be a poet, so the scant proportion of Coleridge's contribution to the poetic wealth of the world must tell in our estimate of his poetic rank. But his place is with the immortals, and his eminence is in some respects the more remarkable from the very causes which shroud it, as a peak looks higher among clouds. The mystic twilight of *Christabel* might have lost its charm in a conclusion. On the whole, of course, his poetry would have gained much if less fragmentary, but there is something which it would thus have lost.

We would compare his verse to one of those gleamy, picturesque days in late autumn, when the brief interval between morning and sunset seems touched by reminiscence or anticipation of the twilight. The light is never brilliant, and never steady; it is always a 'gleam upon gloom,' but from this very reason it has a peculiar, soft, delicate, misty radiance under which the commonest objects take a new charm. At its noontide it has something of an evening beauty, and the evening is upon us before we realise that the afternoon has begun. His last important poem was finished while he had still the lifetime of a generation to pass in this world; and even the outward imagery of this dirge on his 'shaping spirit of imagination' harmonises with the spirit of an approaching twilight of the soul. It is with the fulness of poetic utterance that he takes his farewell of poetry. We see in that farewell, in all its perfection, his delicate observation of Nature, especially of those more ethereal aspects of Nature which belong to atmospheric influences: the green evening sky at which his unintelligent critics



sneered, the thin evanescent clouds that 'give away their motion to the stars,' such faint, pure, transient shades and tints as Turner, who may be considered his pictorial brother, was just then preparing to reveal in a world previously contemplated under the influence of vague conventional description, and needing a poet's touch to be truly seen. It is not only in objects belonging to what we are accustomed to associate with Nature, in the conventional sense of the word, that we may follow this revealing, sympathetic gaze. Coleridge enlarges that meaning, he shows us new beauties not only in the heavens but in regions where we have been accustomed to look for nothing poetic. The lines entitled (not very happily, we think) *Frost at Midnight*, bring this attentiveness to all subdued, evanescent forms of light to bear on an object as prosaic as his bedroom fire. When he tells us that

'the thin blue flame  
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not,'

how expressively, as it were with a Zoroastrian touch, he associates the life in the flame with his own sense of repose, and the soft breathings of his sleeping babe. Shut into his own chamber with the curtains drawn, his imagination still finds appropriate material; here also we trace his vivid, dreamy sympathy with whatever is shadowy, whatever leaves the imagination space and scope, and is most suited as a symbolism of sad memory. The stillness of midnight is painted with a peculiar force in the following lines, fixing attention on a trivial object of which the faint movement could only in that absolute quiet be admitted to a fantastic impersonation, natural in the eerie solitude of that hour:

'Only that film which fluttered on the grate  
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing,  
Methinks its motion in the hush of Nature  
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,  
Making it a companionable form,  
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling spirit  
By its own moods interprets—everywhere  
Echo or mirror-seeking of itself.'

Perhaps we must set him beside Wordsworth before we can fully appreciate his legacy, just as the faint flush of a

rose-petal may need association with its neighbours to make its delicate colour tell. His poetry is full of what we may call Wordsworthian touches; indeed his name might just as well have afforded an epithet for the poetic and accurate delineation of natural objects in verse, if only he had written more: it was his office as much as Wordsworth's to impress on us all that is hidden in the every-day scenes around us. It is as when, in the dawn of the Newtonian astronomy, a writer published a work entitled *A Discourse concerning a New Planet*—the earth, to wit. It was a new planet in the literal sense of the word; it took its place among the stars, but did not cease to remain our familiar home. In this sense it may be said that Wordsworth and Coleridge combined in the discovery of a new planet—they gave this every-day world the glory of a star. If common things may be looked *into*, and not merely looked *at*, it is mainly to these two poets we owe this priceless gift. But the difference of the 'great twin brethren' is as instructive as their resemblance. Coleridge is always intimate with his reader. We might almost say that Wordsworth is never intimate with his reader. He teaches, informs, narrates, but does not confide. The single exception which occurs to us—the verses entitled *A Complaint*—if, as it is said, they were inspired by Coleridge, may be said to prove the rule. The tone of pathetic appeal—of unreproachful love sensible of chill—is certainly much more like Coleridge than the writer, and if indeed he was the friend there immortalised, we may trace the close spiritual kindred of the two poets in a sort of mesmeric influence potent even in absence and estrangement. Wordsworth speaks of himself continually, his poetic legacy contains his autobiography, and his verse is occasionally egotistic; but the lines to which we have referred are the only instance we can recall in which we should describe it as confidential. Coleridge is in this respect more allied to Byron; the fact that there is nothing of the 'pageant' in his 'bleeding heart,' makes it seem unnatural to compare them; but we feel equally with both that the interest lies in the unveiling of an individuality. Except in the *Ancient Mariner*—a notable exception, no doubt, but one



which in many respects stands apart from the rest of his poetry—all the finer interests of Coleridge's verse lie in the revelation of himself. The ode which we have noticed as glowing with the sunset of his muse bears in its very form the impress of an intimate confidence. It is addressed to no vague public, but (as at first written) to an 'Edmund,' whose ideal personality formed a transparent veil for that of Wordsworth. The change of that pseudonym for the anonymous 'Lady' (whom we are taught to identify with Wordsworth's sister-in-law) is on several accounts to be regretted; it introduces a slight touch of sentimentality which, just because it is not altogether out of harmony with the self-revelation of a morbid nature, should have been resolutely held at bay; and it commemorates a bitter recollection of the saddest estrangement of Coleridge's sad life. Let the reader always substitute, not the original *Edmund*, but the real *Wordsworth* for the nameless 'Lady' (and the unknown Otway), and let us especially recall the conclusion, as peculiarly expressive, in one way or another, of both poets and of their friendship. We give the lines as they at first appeared in the *Morning Post*, with this single and desirable alteration. The subject is the sound of the wind in the Æolian harp:

'It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud,  
As *Wordsworth's* self had framed the tender lay.  
'Tis of a little child  
Upon a lonesome wild  
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way,  
And now moans low in utter grief and fear,  
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

'Tis midnight; and small thoughts have I of sleep,  
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!  
Visit him, gentle Sleep, with wings of healing,  
And may this storm be but a mountain birth.  
May all the stars hang bright above his dwelling,  
Silent as though they watched the silent earth.  
With light heart may he rise,  
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,  
And sing his lofty song, and teach me to rejoice!  
Oh, *Wordsworth*! friend of my devoutest choice,  
Oh, raised from anxious dread and busy care  
By the immenseness of the good and fair

Which thou seest everywhere—  
Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice—  
To thee do all things live from pole to pole,  
Their life the eddying of thy living soul.  
O simple spirit, guided from above!  
O lofty poet, full of life and love!  
Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,  
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice!’

The reader who studies that address from Coleridge to Wordsworth, and remembers that it is the last verse in his last poem, and that he lived thirty-two years after writing it, holds a clue to all that is most vital in the life of both poets, and the literary movement that centres in them. That in its present form it commemorates estrangement rather than union does but enhance its significance as a revelation of the life of Coleridge.

If he had died in the year in which he wrote these lines we should have almost the same little collection of fragmentary remains that we possess now, and they would be surrounded by that peculiar halo which belongs to brilliant promise cut off by the inexorable. Why should an early blight raise nothing of the emotion with which we contemplate an early death? No tragedy quite equals in intensity that loss of power which leaves half life's day in twilight; its exhibition in the fate of one whose utterances were all musical and all personal may teach us sympathy with the sorrows of many a dumb nameless life, than which genius can teach no higher lesson.

It is not an unmixed advantage in this short life to have undertaken more than one kind of intellectual endeavour, even if the endeavour be successful. An extended frontier is an increased vulnerable surface, and the very wealth of natures like Coleridge's is a source of their danger. He was almost as much a politician as a poet, and the world of politics was encumbered throughout his lifetime with the wreck of a great hope. His youth opened under the glow of such anticipations for mankind as we cannot recall at any other period of the world's history since the dawn of Christianity. 'Bliss was it in that day to be alive. But to be young was very Heaven.' How soon was that gleam swallowed up in storm! Then as always there



were natures to which the storm was more full of stimulus than the gleam. Byron embodies the spirit of the Revolution in contention with a world of authority; his verse is impressed throughout both by the instincts of revolt, and also by the traditions of aristocracy; it thus attains that balance of antithetic impulse which forms the very life of Art. There were also natures which the storm impelled towards a realm of calm, the world of struggle and disorder forming as it were a stormy sea which enlisted their spirits in a domain of order—such was that poet whose name must recur on every page that speaks of Coleridge. Wordsworth's political sympathies were robust, but they were not dominant. His sense of order found its home in the world of Nature, and where he dips his wings into the turbid flood of politics, it is but for a moment; he returns at once to his native element, and (as in the stanzas on the expected death of Fox, for instance) the thought which starts under the impression of a national crisis soars at once into a region belonging to a broad humanity, and admitting no considerations which do not concern man as man. Coleridge's was a more political mind; it is said that his articles in the *Morning Post* had some influence in terminating the Peace of Amiens, and a legend (so it seems to us) of a French chase in the Mediterranean, specially motivated by Napoleon's desire to capture Coleridge on his return from Malta, has weighty adhesion.<sup>1</sup> There is such a thing as poetry inspired by political feeling—whatever deserves the name of poetry in the verse of Coleridge's brother-in-law, Southey, appears to us of this character. A man of Coleridge's genius and a different character might conceivably have been the Tyrtæus of the anti-Napoleonic war. But then his character must have been totally different. The very fact that the only poem of Coleridge's which is at once political and generally familiar—*Fire, Famine and Slaughter*—suggests a set of sympathies rather with France than with England in that war, shows, when we couple it with what is said above, how many-sided and complex were his political impulses, and how remote from the unimpeded swing of feeling

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Trail believes the story.

which finds expression in telling satire or partisan ballad. On the whole, he was Conservative, as was his time, but he was incompletely sympathetic with the Conservatism of his time. That reaction against the sympathies roused by the French Revolution which lasted through the first half of our century (and of which our late Laureate kept some faint echoes), was not so much a political influence as an influence tending to cast strong political feeling into the background of thought, and its general current was the more hostile to Coleridge's poetic genius, because his divergence from it was not striking or obvious. There is no discord so intolerable as that which is by only a semitone divided from unison, and all who have ever striven to impress their views on another mind have realised that an apparent agreement may mark a far more hopeless barrier than a vigorous protest, or even an indignant contradiction.

The loss of an environment of political sympathy was not, it is well known, the only reason of the early blight on Coleridge's poetic genius. Perhaps the English mind is somewhat inclined to overrate the importance of an unhappy marriage. A man may lack sympathy by his domestic hearth and not experience the utter desolation which we sometimes imagine as the portion of all who have not here found their true union. The world of friendship is so rich in its possibilities of moral stimulus and encompassing warmth, that it affords some compensation even for this central disappointment; nor need this be quite so bitter as is sometimes imagined, provided it be pure from remorse, and softened by kindness, as there is every reason to think was the case with the Coleridges. But affection was more necessary to Coleridge than to most people, and the loss of a happy home infused something baleful into his friendships. When he wrote of himself, 'to be beloved is all I need,' he said what is not quite true of any human being; but, probably, it was as nearly true of him as of any one. When he added, 'and whom I love I love indeed,' he was a little under the influence of the mistake which he ascribed to Wordsworth, when he wrote in 1818, evidently referring to him, 'It is a



mistake to which affectionate natures are too liable—the mistaking those who are desirous and well pleased to be loved by you, for those who love you.’ There he seems to us to have revealed his own temptations in an unjust reference to another. He sometimes stood in the same relation to the affections which he called into existence, as he did to his own children. He awakened hopes which he could not satisfy, and created relations which he could not continue. His attractive power seems to have been almost universal, its influence even may be measured by the desire of his landlord and neighbour at Keswick (a retired carrier), who had no special bond with him, to give him his house free of rent; while no one ever exercised more magnetic influence on a group of disciples than he did; but it must be added that the magnet was sometimes reversed. Every one was ready to receive him as an inmate, even after experience of his defects, and he spent the last eighteen years of his life as a guest in a household<sup>1</sup> where tendance on his many needs seems to have been felt merely a privilege. He found, in his relation to a united pair, that sense of a stable environment, which gives the fragment we know as a *selv*, the complement which makes it a *unity*. It is the experience of all happy marriage, but not so exclusively confined to marriage as we are apt to suppose.

It is a misfortune that the bonds by which complex human beings are united are so much more various than the names by which we define them. It prevents our realising that love may fail in other respects than that of quantity. In the strange misfits of this stage of our being it does sometimes appear as if unkindness itself were not more separating than an unsuitable kind of affection. Cohesion and gravitation, we know, are but different species of attraction, but their laws are different,

<sup>1</sup> Of course the connection could not have originated on this footing, but the mere knowledge of the circumstances on both sides is enough to corroborate the tradition in the Gillman family that it became substantially one of hospitality. I would take this opportunity of naming with gratitude a granddaughter of the Gillmans, now wife of the Rev. Henry Watson, to whose liberal communication of Coleridge's marginalia, and records of the deep reverence with which his memory was treasured by her grandparents, the present sketch owes its origin.

and it sometimes happens to human beings to find themselves in circumstances which we may dimly shadow forth by imagining a planet to be endowed with consciousness and forced to conform to the laws which regulate the attraction of a molecule. The needs of each human being for his special distance from those to whom he is united in one system seem almost as unchangeable as physical law, and when external circumstances defy them, moral disaster seems inevitable. We say 'seems,' for no one can say what perfect rightness would produce even against natural tendency, or how near human beings might approach to perfect rightness, if this were their sole object. We are only urging that for imperfect human beings in this world to be, as it were, out of focus, is to be apparently cut off from the possibility of mutual understanding. That Coleridge passed the last eighteen years of his life as a member of a family circle, in what we should have imagined the most unpropitious circumstances possible, and left only tender and reverent memories, is no confutation of our belief that his affections demanded, as it were, a certain space of separation from their object, for the difference between conjugal closeness and any other is almost as great when friends live in the same house as when they live a thousand miles apart. He was adapted to the life of gravitation, and in early youth he plunged rashly into the life of cohesion. With a nature like his—thirsty for love, lacking in moral fortitude—we hardly need any other explanation of his disasters.

He seems to have loved his wife tenderly at first, but the ebb came soon. In the first year of their marriage they went to live in a tiny cottage, the attraction to which consisted in its close proximity to the house of his excellent friend, Thomas Poole, at Nether Stowey, under whose roof, he said, he felt more at home than under his own. Had the arrangement been planned by an enemy, it could not have been more hostile to his domestic happiness. Close contact is a strain on all but the warmest love; with ill-health on both sides (and two babies in two years must have secured to Mrs. Coleridge that experience of physical ill which was the lifelong portion of her husband), the mere



fact of being shut up in a few small rooms with no possibility of absolute solitude, would probably be a strain on any love. And then, to make matters worse, the hearty welcome ready for Coleridge in that comfortable dwelling, which he could reach by merely crossing the garden attached to it, could not possibly include his wife. Mr. Poole was the kindest of men, and doubtless did all in his power to make her at home in his house, but he cannot have been always glad to see her, and his relations seem to have sometimes made it plain that they would have preferred her room to her company. In the trials here suggested love seems to have been badly hurt; it revived apparently in the year which Coleridge spent in Germany, or at least his thoughts of her in absence were—as in kind hearts the thoughts of those who have once been dear are always—tender and affectionate; but outward reunion seems only to have revealed the hopelessness of inward disunion. What has been well called the swan song of his muse, the *Ode to Dejection*, was also the elegy of his love; it is interesting to observe the disguise thrown in the poem over the feeling of miserable estrangement, expressed at the same time in that perilous luxury of complaint, after which all oblivion is impossible. Alienation from those who should be and have been dear is always complicated with jealousy. Mrs. Coleridge never seems to have had either cause for or temptation to jealousy in its darker aspect; but when he had ceased to love her, she would have been more than human if she could watch his love for his friends with complacency, and he may have been wanting in sympathy for her comparative friendlessness; at any rate, the want of a welcome from her for them was as trying to him at Keswick as the want of a welcome from them for her had been trying at Stowey. Alas! it is easy and needless to account for the estrangement of an ill-matched pair. Perhaps in such a case all external circumstances seem in retrospect almost alleviations, affording the wounded heart some semblance of excuse in its self-reproach. The bitterest reflection of all is that which Coleridge expresses later in some lines which, by their very unlikeness to his more customary

rhythm and music, seem to express, in a peculiar degree, some waft from his own experience :

‘Idly we supplicate the powers above :  
There is no resurrection for a love  
That unperturbed, unshadowed, wanes away  
In the chilled heart by inward self-decay.  
Poor mimic of the past ! the love is o’er  
That must *resolve* to do what did itself of yore.’

A little while ago there was a correspondence in the newspapers as to what in the opinion of their readers was the most pathetic couplet in the language. If we ever undertook to answer that question, the last two lines of this quotation would be what we should be greatly tempted to bring forward as our choice.

The loss of a happy home may sometimes enrich the world of friendship, but such compensation is rare. Few influences are more hurtful to a secondary attachment than the endeavour to make it do the work of a primary one, and it needs wonderful self-control to refrain from that endeavour wherever the temptation to it exists. Self-control is not often united with genius, and in the case of Coleridge there was less of it than in the case of any other man equally distinguished. One rises from the account of his quarrels with a paradoxical combination of admiration for the tolerance of his friends and sympathy for his own sensitiveness: few men have met with so much forbearance, and yet few inspire so much pity. In the lack of that warmth at home which would have made all outside misunderstandings mere lamentable incidents, they constituted his atmosphere. That his suspicions of Lamb or Wordsworth were unreasonable did not preclude—possibly it increased—their paralysing influence. What is utterly unreasonable is irrefutable. It remains unapproachable by anything but the urgency of an emotion which faithful affection may lack, and thus the very injustice of resentment in some cases secures its permanence. The poetic temperament is not invariably dependent on the warmth of the heart. In the case of Coleridge’s contemporary and admirer, Byron, it would appear that disappointment did but drive creative energy more im-



periously to an ideal world. But with Coleridge the escape was thereby rendered impossible. His muse could breathe only in the atmosphere of kindness, and took flight at the approach of discord. When he wrote 'my genial spirits fail' he was using the word *genial* in its classical sense; he was expressing that most grievous bereavement, perhaps, which befalls a human being, when that spring of literary production which is the source of almost the keenest delight that man can know, dries up under some baleful influence and leaves life empty.

It is an instructive, but often a very melancholy exercise, to trace in warnings and aspirations the inverted picture of experience. Some sentences, bearing on the duty of mutual kindness, which we might collect from the poems of Coleridge, are a little prosaic, and rather like references in a sermon or moral essay (and these are not to our mind the least pathetic of them); but the best known, which is also the best known quotation from his writings, and almost from the English language, is not richer in moral emphasis than in poetic beauty. No anthology omits the extract from *Christabel*, which—knowing how rarely what is familiar is remembered accurately—we are bold enough to reproduce. The reader who studies it will, we believe, hold the clue to a large part of the problem of the poet's life:

'Alas, they had been friends in youth,  
But whispering tongues can poison truth,  
And constancy dwells in realms above,  
And life is thorny, and youth is vain ;  
And to be wroth with one we love  
Doth work like madness in the brain.  
And thus it chanced, as I divine,  
With Roland and Sir Leoline.  
Each spoke words of high disdain  
And insult to his heart's best brother.  
They parted—ne'er to meet again,  
But never either found another  
o f r e e the hollow heart from paining.  
h e y s t o o d aloof, the scars remaining ;  
Like cliffs that had been rent asunder.  
A dreary sea now flows between,  
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder  
Shall wholly do away, I ween,  
The marks of that which once had been.'

To present the readers of a Review with lines so familiar is a proof of some courage, but the passage is even more interesting as a contribution to the biography of Coleridge than as a fragment of immortal verse. The only part which seems to us to lack perennial truth has a special value as a revelation of individual history. The beauty of the passage lies, on the whole, in its broad human application, its reference to the life of every day. Where it deviates into an expression of something exceptional, we are sensible of a want of harmony with the rest—an intrusion of a dramatic expression into a reflection on life. When the poet tells us ‘that to be wroth with one we love doth work like madness in the brain,’ he puts into words which every child can understand an emotion which all human beings, as they look back upon life, remember having felt or witnessed. When he tells us that ‘whispering tongues can poison truth,’ he leads us to a region where we dare to say nine out of ten of his readers will remember nothing at all. The sentence paints an experience as unforgettable as rare; it is one of which fiction has so largely availed itself, that perhaps its actual rarity is somewhat disguised; but any one who will interrogate his own memory, will allow that it belongs to exceptional natures in exceptional circumstances. While the rest reveals to us an insight into human nature, this one line, given in the same key as the rest, and not with any modulation into something dramatic, expresses not insight, but that tendency to morbid suspicion which is most blinding. But it cannot be denied that Coleridge’s was a suspicious character. Here and there his reader, without any evidence except the general experience of life, ventures to discard as a sick dream such a statement as that a warm dedication to a brother was felt inadequate. Sometimes his suspiciousness provokes a melancholy smile. He told a friend, for instance, that the kindred of his excellent friend Poole had manifested a great dislike towards himself and every one belonging to him, including his ‘poor little boy.’ Hartley seems to have been the idol of every one that had anything to do with him, and at all events he was not five



years old when he was taken away from the neighbourhood of the Pooles. It is credible enough that they did not feel particularly cordial towards a family, every member of which must, unless gifted with supernatural discretion, have been sometimes in their way, and no doubt the 'fairy child' who inspired Wordsworth's loveliest lines may have been troublesome. But there is something ludicrous in resenting annoyance with the troublesomeness of a little child; and the soreness betrayed here will discover the work of whispering tongues in every transient cooling of affection.

No doubt such fancies sometimes realise themselves. The bitterest alienation of Coleridge's life—next to that from his wife—that which for some years divided him from Wordsworth, and prevented their intimacy ever again being what it had been, was occasioned by an unwise and exaggerated repetition of a caution given by Wordsworth to Basil Montague. And what would have been the next bitterest but that, much to the honour of both parties, it was transient—his quarrel with Charles Lamb—does seem also to have had some origin of this kind. The whisperer was a now forgotten poet, a certain Charles Lloyd, who had been associated with Coleridge both in a common publication and a common household. It was inevitable that there should have been some disagreement, and when it came it must have been specially painful, for the loss of an inmate of easy fortune was inconvenient as well as distressing, it removed Coleridge's chief source of income. What was worse was that Lloyd passed on something to Lamb which produced a bitter correspondence between him and Coleridge. We could fancy that this incident is reflected not only in the lines to which we have taken exception, but in the whole poem in which they occur. Coleridge had opened his home to a stranger as had *Christabel*, he had allowed the halo of his genius to encircle second-rate productions, and thus irrevocably proclaimed his friendship for one from whom he came to withdraw it; he had experienced the malign influence of the object of his hospitable beneficence, and had found it chill a far dearer affection. All this seems to

us repeated in the poem with just that unlikeness with which imagination reproduces the outline of experience. Perhaps we may give Lloyd too much importance in associating him with an immortal poem, but we should give him much<sup>1</sup> if we attended to contemporary mention instead of his own works; and the suggestions which a genius adopts and transmutes are generally shadowy. If an incident or a character reappears in labelled portraiture the art will generally be found second-rate, as was indeed the case with this very friendship. A literal transcript of Coleridge's experience in the ranks, when poverty had led him to enlist in a cavalry regiment, is to be found in a novel by Lloyd which owes any reader of our day to this portrait of his illustrious friend. There must have been strong affection between them at first, there was kindly feeling at last, and the poet may have hoped that his unhappy home would have been less desolate after the inclusion of an inmate with common tastes and aspirations. When to the disappointments of these hopes was added the discovery of a power in the alienated friend to alienate others, we can well conceive that Coleridge's sore heart found a certain relief in stimulating his powerful imagination, and that some trace of what was futile and trivial may be found in an immortal work of art.

Perhaps it was not only faults for which he was directly accountable which came between him and his friends. The most painful quarrel in which he ever engaged seems to have been exacerbated by the failure of overtures from him, which were felt as tainted with sentimentality, such at least, in our view, is the letter on the death of the little Thomas Wordsworth, to which it appears that the bereaved father failed to respond with any warmth. Wordsworth never ceased to love and to excuse him; but we should imagine that this particular tendency was more

<sup>1</sup> Lamb said of him, for instance:

‘I’ll think less meanly of myself  
That Lloyd will sometimes think on me.’

And Coleridge, long after their quarrel, affixed some of his marginalia to verses which the reader of our day peruses with effort, but to which the faint pencilling now supplying its main interest ascribes ‘much merit.’

distasteful to him than to most people. A certain haze rests on their estrangement. The poem which is supposed to refer to it—*The Complaint*—if the theory be correct, is made intentionally misleading. Again we venture to give the well-known lines, that the reader may judge:

‘There is a change—and I am poor;  
Your love hath been, nor long ago,  
A fountain at my fond heart’s door,  
Whose only business was to flow;—  
And flow it did, not taking heed  
Of its own bounty or my need.

‘What happy moments did I count!  
Blessed was I then all bliss above.  
Now, for that consecrated fount  
Of murmuring, sparkling, living love—  
What have I? Shall I dare to tell?  
A comfortless and hidden well.

‘A well of love—it may be deep,  
I trust it is—and never dry.  
What matters? if the waters sleep  
In silence and obscurity.  
Such change and at the very door  
Of my fond heart hath made me poor.’

The name of Coleridge must occur to every reader who peruses these lines and remembers that they were written by Wordsworth; it is indeed impossible to fix upon another in Wordsworth’s happy life associated with the chill and disappointment they convey, but it is not difficult to imagine that any one should suffer from estrangement of which the world knows nothing, and the sentiment of the verses seems to us very unlike that with which Wordsworth must have remembered his quarrel with Coleridge. However, it is about as probable that an address in verse to an alienated friend should be somewhat misleading as to the actual facts, as that it should commemorate a disappointed affection inspired by one whom nobody knows, and felt by one whom everybody knows, for neither contingency is improbable. We may at any rate take it for granted that when Wordsworth wrote some lines in that touching effusion, he could not



but remember the brother bard who had been once his daily companion, though mountains intervened.

What had caused their quarrel was some expression which he could not altogether repudiate, however much he deplored its exaggerated repetition, to the effect that he (Wordsworth) had no hope for Coleridge. It is worth recalling that expression of despondency from Coleridge's poetic brother, to enhance the lesson of encouragement taught by his life. He became the teacher and guide he was felt by our fathers, after one who knew him best and loved him best had confessed to feeling no hope for him. We cannot cite another fact from the biography of great men equally pregnant with exhortation to hopeful thoughts on the destinies of all. The years he spent on Highgate Hill, in the home of the physician who rescued him from his slavery to opium, and set him free to live, succeeded to a neglect of duty that no circumstance can do more than palliate. There is no need to dwell upon this interval, for its general character is known to all who know anything about Coleridge. But neither should it be forgotten, or judged leniently. When genius abjures the responsibilities of manhood it becomes a criminal, not only towards those whose claims are obviously and unquestionably neglected, but to that wider circle for whom its influence slackens the bonds of duty and prepares apologies for wrongdoing. Happily, in the case of Coleridge the remedy and the poison grow side by side. An appreciation of his work as a thinker is not included in the present endeavour, even to the same degree that it has undertaken such an appreciation of his work as a poet, but any attempt to illustrate his work from his life must needs echo the protest of his teaching against some part of his example.

For his prose, not less than his verse—though no doubt less impressively because it is so much less impressive—receives light from and flashes it back upon his biography. It is so little familiar to the readers of our day that many would be surprised at discovering that in bulk it largely exceeds his verse. It is difficult to read, for two reasons. No other English prose, surely, contains so many valuable



thoughts presented in so unfortunate a form. We have constantly to attend to some one else's opinion before we learn his own; and to disentangle his view of the perennial from something temporary. And, moreover, it breathes that atmosphere of the obsolete so peculiarly blunting to attention. We have heard it said by a man of science that nothing was more unreadable to his fraternity than the scientific writings which lay just beyond the limits of the special study of each. It is on the same principle, we suppose, that the thought that lies just beyond our own scope of reminiscence—using the word in a broad sense, and taking in more than the memory of a generation—is less interesting than what is either older or newer. The works of a thinker, in their relation to public appreciation, go through three stages. At first, whatever is new in them strikes the public ear, and receives an eager welcome. After a time there is a reaction. All that startled an elder generation stirs a certain impatience in those on whom that teaching has been impressed as a kind of orthodoxy; they are apt to turn away with the feeling 'we know all that well enough,' even if they do not go on to the further decision 'and we see the mistakes in it.' The final stage, when what is new or old has lost other than a historic significance, and men ask only what is true, comes much more tardily, and has not yet arrived in the case of Coleridge.

With a warning sense of the misleadingness of all labels attached to a thinker, we would venture to describe him as the father of the Broad Church. His death almost coincided with the start of the High Church movement. Carlyle seems to take him as the prophet of that movement, and there is a loose sense in which all who recognise a common foe may be grouped together; but it seems to us that his power lay exactly in his divergence from the High Church party. He looked beyond the rising wave of public thought; he saw clearly, not only what men were beginning to see dimly, but what they were not for some time to see at all. It is the very fact of his having seen clearly truths of special interest to a day that is but just past which makes him in this point of view, comparatively

uninteresting to ours. If he had stood a very little ahead of his own, the stage of reaction would by this time have been almost past. As it is, we stand in its full shadow. Forty years ago, that school of liberal theology which accepts both the tradition of antiquity and also the alliance of modern speculation, had the effervescence resulting from any combination of previously hostile elements of thought. To-day it has the flatness which must needs succeed to such effervescence. Whatever is true in it is as true now as it was then. But whatever was new in it then has now that association of triteness which clings even to important truth if it has been emphasised for more than a generation. At no stage of thought, it will be found, is truth so difficult to appreciate. Coleridge supplies the animating principle to what we may call the new orthodoxy of our time, and orthodoxy is always uninspiring. We shall understand him, in this point of view, best through the interest he awakened in those who stood near enough to him to catch some waft from his magnetic personality, and to drink in his thoughts before their own echoes had made them seem commonplace.

We have large material, in the memoirs of his contemporaries, for an appreciation of that fascination which has been hardly paralleled since Socrates drank his cup of hemlock; and it does but bear out the comparison that the chorus of his admirers is interrupted by the laughter of an Aristophanes. It is the last, we fear, which comes most distinctly to the ear of our generation. Almost all attempts to follow some record of the spoken words which have most stirred the hearts of their hearers are like listening to those words through a closed door—we follow the main purport of the discourse, we catch a sentence here and there, but just when our attention is most roused the words become indistinct, and the sequence is broken. Yet if, in the wordless records of memory, the reader find nothing that renders easy of belief a spell which no intellectual endeavour can reproduce, he has lacked much of what is most precious in life. How many a conversation, conveying nothing to one who hears it at second-hand, recurs to the hearer's recollection with a vividness which



brings back the modulations of tone to the ear, the furniture of the room or the details of the landscape to the eye, and in which the words are lost only because they so flooded the soul with large ideas or indistinct emotions that the mere vehicle was submerged. The thoughts have passed into our memory like music or fragrance, and the endeavour to restore them to language is like that of the fisherman in the Arabian tale to reimprison the genius in the vessel from which he had escaped and soared to the clouds. Such memories are a clue to what is deepest in the meaning of human intercourse, although the endeavour to transfer them to another mind is vain.

It is a striking and significant fact that we may quote two accounts of Coleridge's conversation, each from a man of genius, and written from personal experience, which flatly contradict each other. The conversation of Coleridge

'was,' says Wordsworth (Knight's *Life*, i. 129), 'like a majestic river, the sound or sight of whose course you caught at intervals, which was sometimes concealed by forests, sometimes lost in sand, then came flashing out broad and distinct, and even when it took a turn which your eye could not follow, yet you always felt and knew that there was a connection in its parts, and that it was the same river.'

Carlyle, without apparently being aware that he is contradicting Wordsworth, says that it was

'talk not flowing anywhither like a river, but spreading everywhere in inextricable currents and regurgitations like a lake or sea; terribly deficient, in definite goal or aim, nay, often in logical intelligibility; what you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that, most times, you felt logically lost, swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world.'—(*Life of John Sterling*, ch. viii.)

The caricature from which this is an extract, and by which, probably, Coleridge is best known to the readers of our day, will amuse all readers and perhaps most instruct those



who turn to it for instruction rather as to the artist than the subject of the sketch. 'The account Carlyle has given of Coleridge's conversation would do very well for his own,' was the comment made on it when his *Life of Sterling* first appeared by one whom Carlyle loved well. Perhaps the remark explains the want of sympathy in the delineation which called it forth. It is a brilliant picture of whatever was feeble or odd in Coleridge's premature old age, and it has touches here and there full of illuminating characterisation; but it misleads more than it enlightens the student of a pregnant thinker and eloquent teacher. We may turn to a portrait, as much more sympathetic, as the painting is feebler, from the hand of Sterling himself, preserved in that first biography of him which provoked Carlyle's. It is instructive to note the inversion produced by the lapse of time in the relative vitality of satire and eulogy. To a contemporary ear the former is generally more interesting. After a certain date it is the satire which falls flat and the reverence which is felt to be full of life. To our mind the chapter in which the young disciple endeavours to retain the echoes of teaching which seemed to him precious is more interesting than that in which his brilliant biographer seems to prick the bladder of that enthusiasm. We gain more even from a meagre and unfruitful inventory which gives the heads of a discourse awakening enthusiastic devotion, than from the laugh which substitutes the impression of a tedious preacher and a besotted audience. No doubt there is such a thing as enthusiasm given to an unworthy object. But it is not nearly so common as ridicule directed against an object more worthy of enthusiasm than of ridicule.

The eulogy of Wordsworth, the satire of Carlyle, the attempted record of John Sterling, bear witness to the impression left on all hearers by that inspired utterance which in the third and fourth decades of our century was a magnet to the many pilgrims to Dr. Gilman's house on Highgate Hill. For a tribute to the same influence in which all strictly personal influence is filtered away, the reader should turn to the article written by John Mill fifty-four years ago for the *Westminster Review*, which

holds in some respects an exceptional position in the world of criticism. We at least cannot recall another account given by one great man of another (unless Carlyle's essay on Voltaire be worthy of the description) where principles which the writer spent his life in opposing are the object of candid and sympathetic appreciation, and a character weak where his own was strong is touched on with reverence and modesty. This rare harmony of sympathy and antagonism is a tribute both to the critic and to the thinker criticised, but in our opinion mainly to the latter. The critic, indeed, must have brought to his task a rare capacity for intellectual justice; but when we remember some aspects of his later career we shall be inclined to doubt whether the philosophic Radical could have judged the philosophic Conservative so truly unless he had found in him something that lay at the root of his own creed as well as of that which was the object of his antagonism. The influence which supplied their link was deeper than a divergence going down to the very roots of all that language can undertake adequately to represent to the mind, and must when rightly received supply a link to all human thought and aspiration.

The poetry of Coleridge owes its peculiar beauty to the fact of its embodying, in a deeper sense than we could use the words of almost any other poet, the revelation of a character. His philosophy owes to the same cause all that we can recognise as its perennial truth. One much indebted to him—Frederick Maurice—says of him that he was a penitent as well as a philosopher. The words, though we should express their meaning rather differently, give the clue to what is most valuable in his thought. Whatever he has to say to the seeker after truth depends on its relation to that experience of struggle with evil which teaches the meaning of reality as in this world nothing else does. In his youth he had given himself to the study of German philosophy unknown at that time to English students, and at all times inaccessible to any but students; in his age he discovered that the highest triumph of philosophy is to bring its illuminating influence to beliefs



that lie hid in the heart of the ignorant and the poor. His aim was to transform the dogmas that most men had learned to the truths that all might believe. He saw that distinctions which seem idle pedantry from without, from within are recognised as directions corresponding to the deepest needs of the human soul. This we may say of the distinction between the Understanding and the Reason, recurrent throughout all his prose writings. Erroneous for the man of science of our day, meaningless for the mere man of letters; it becomes to one who discovers that there is within a man some faculty which *takes hold of that which is*, a matter of life and death. His distinction between the will and all that sequence of cause and effect which we gather up under the name of Nature, is at once the core of his philosophy and the clue to his inmost history. He must have pondered over it more earnestly than almost any other man that ever lived, for it is hardly possible to conceive of one in whom the faculty of Will was subject to so strange a paralysis. We read his biography with a sense of bewilderment at the discovery that duties clearly discerned by one keenly alive to the meaning of duty should be as absolutely neglected as by a man without heart or conscience. Probably our bewilderment does not equal his own. He was driven to ask more earnestly, we should think, than any of his generation, the questions which centre in the very idea of human choice. What happens when a man does wrong? What happens when he turns from darkness to light? Something of which the world of nature presents no type or likeness; which is *original* in a sense in which there is nothing original in the whole world of physical being. Something which—it is but the same statement in other words—must to the understanding be for ever invisible, which the reason alone can discern. This we conceive was the truth which Coleridge learnt through bitter experience. He had felt the bondage of nature, the absolute character of that law of necessity to which a man may surrender himself if he live under the sequence of the physical. He also came to realise the deliverance which proceeds from that which is above and



beyond Nature, to learn that things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, are in the teaching of life revealed by God. And what he thus learnt, though taught in a faltering voice, and with the mingled hurry and diffuseness with which we always fulfil the morning's task in the late afternoon, was yet enough to make him to our fathers a teacher and seer such as the world has not often known in its whole history.

If we have touched aright on the clue to Coleridge's deepest thought, we have suggested also an explanation of its temporary eclipse. If the very core of his philosophy centres in the antithesis of Nature, as a sequence of Cause and Effect, and Spirit, as the origin of Will, it is inevitable that its meaning should be dimmed for a school which enlarges the scope of Nature to include all that can be gathered up in the range of human knowledge, and denies the very existence of a power behind phenomena, revealed immediately to the Reason of Humanity. That school has possessed, for a large part of the half-century we are just concluding, an irresistible influence in the world of thought: its meridian is long past, but we are still living in its twilight. But in the world of thought, as in the night of a northern summer, the twilight of one day mingles with the dawn of another. Yesterday's answer to its problems is not the answer of to-day, even when the problems seem identical. The atmosphere of a time is not a mere metaphor: in the great year of human development the seasons have their mystic influence which we cannot replace by industrious attention, or even analyse for the computation of strict logic. And as long as we interrogate the thoughts of the past with the demand that they should answer the perplexities of the present, we shall find in them that semitone interval which, as we have said, is the harshest of all discords. Nevertheless we would leave, as our last word on Coleridge, our conviction that in his prose writings is something which speaks to the heart of every one who seeks the invisible: that this element will become clearer as his voice disentangles itself from its own echoes, and gains

the freshness of what is remote. He cannot address, in another generation, the same class of hearers which he addressed in his own, but all the more his voice will sound in harmony with that of the invisible choir who have striven to lift the gaze of man above the limits of earth, and enlarge their hopes to an infinite future.

## FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE<sup>1</sup>

THE interesting volumes which we would here introduce to such of our readers as have not already made acquaintance with them describe a character as to which there will be, we imagine, but a single opinion. Concerning the intellectual rank of Frederick Maurice opinions will differ, and the verdict of posterity cannot as yet be anticipated. But as a spring of moral influence, all parties will join, we presume, with a singular unanimity, in the place they would assign to him. An anecdote,<sup>2</sup> not included in these volumes, but which seems to us an epitome of a large part of that which they contain, may be given here as setting before the reader what that place was to those who knew him. About forty years ago, five Cambridge men were talking over a recent execution, previous to which the chaplain of the gaol had spent the whole day with the condemned man; and all agreed that there were very few persons whose presence at such a time and for such an interval would not add a new horror to death. The conversation then turned on the choice which each would make, in the last hours of life, of a companion to accompany him to its utmost verge, and it was agreed by all five that each should write down the name of the person he would choose. The five papers, when opened, were found to contain a single name—that which heads this article. If they had been fifty instead of five, supposing they had all known Maurice, we should imagine that the result would have been the same. The appeal which the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice.* By his Son, F. Maurice. (Macmillan and Co.)

<sup>2</sup> The anecdote is given on the authority of Lord Houghton.



Laureate makes to the spirit of one who is gone before<sup>1</sup> would have been made to him, where it was possible, by almost every one who ever knew him. 'In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment,' his neighbourhood, his influence, was that to which all who had ever known it would turn as to a spring of the strength they should need, and throughout life it was a type of all that was associated with that strength. And the instance of this being felt by a chance group of young men, not bound to him by any special tie, seems to gather up in a graphic form all that is most important to remember about him.

We are disposed to give this record of his life a welcome all the warmer because of what has appeared, to some of those who have been eagerly expecting it, an unreasonable delay. We learn from the preface that an even longer delay would have been prescribed by a literal adherence to Mr. Maurice's own views; and while we are not sorry that circumstances have somewhat curtailed the interval which he thought should elapse between a man's death and his biography, we give the heartiest concurrence to the principal that a biography should be distinctly separated from an obituary notice. Every word addressed to readers who are interested in a man because his bust is just put up in the Abbey, is so much loss for posterity. The more of such readers that Colonel Maurice has lost (if he has lost any), the better for all the rest. And even those who peruse the obituary notice most eagerly want something different after a lapse of years: the expressions which to others have become exaggerated, have lost all adequacy for them. Their loss would be imperfectly described by any words written before it was possible to compare life with him and life without him. Colonel Maurice has done well in awaiting a time when he might address readers who have begun to regard his subject through the mellowing vista of years, and in

<sup>1</sup> Be near me when I fade away  
To point the term of mortal strife;  
And on the last low verge of life,  
The twilight of eternal day.

those new proportions assigned it by the grouping with characters and events visible only from a distance. Doubtless some eyes that would have perused his work most eagerly are now closed for ever. But, 'si quis piorum manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguntur magnæ animæ,' then assuredly those whom death has cut off from a perusal of this volume have learnt its meaning more fully elsewhere. The hope felt by the wise among the heathen becomes a vivid reality in those who can claim no particular wisdom, as they remember Frederick Maurice. And if those who are gone are no losers by the delay, those who remain are great gainers. They may now revive dear memories, and expand familiar knowledge, from a record not marred by haste, nor by that assumption of interest and knowledge in the hearer—characteristic of a biography written specially for disciples—which in reality unfits it for all readers who care for literary excellence, and which tells too much or too little for every one. In addressing the wider circle who approach his subject as a stranger, the biographer best consults the interests of that narrower audience whose knowledge he rather revives than supplies, and the present volumes may be recommended with equal confidence to both. There is no need to recommend the book to those who care for Maurice's writings—to which indeed it may be regarded as an addition; it is little more than an arrangement of his correspondence, with a slight connecting link of narrative. But it will also find a wider audience; the character it reveals is one which will come home with fresh power to many who have not been attracted by any published utterance from his mind. It will interest no one who does not care to ascend into aloftier region than that of the gossiping every-day world; but to those who can breathe this higher atmosphere, it is one of the most interesting biographies of our time.

It will be felt by those who turn to this memoir as to a precious record of their own past, that the years which have elapsed since the life it commemorates was closed, have made it, in some respects, less easy to take an



impartial view of the dead. We often speak of 'the work of time' as if it tended to remove the sense of loss; but a great loss grows with the years. Of course the ordinary view has its truth. There is plenty of justification for those who say that the dead are soon forgotten. Nevertheless, it is also true that they are remembered with most appreciation when their loss lies far behind us. This, which is true of every one who has strongly influenced another human being, is in some ways specially true of Frederick Maurice. The years which have elapsed since he left us have defined his place, and done nothing to fill it. Others have thrown more light than he on the intellectual difficulties which beset the aspiring spirit—others have entered more into the individual training which is hidden in every human history. But he, more than any other teacher of our time, was possessed by such a certainty of God's being, and of His relation to man's spirit, that in comparison the evidence appeared to him weak of any facts which could be recognised only through the outward and fallible senses. All that ordinarily goes by the name of knowledge was therefore to him interesting and valuable mainly as an illustration of truth more absolute than itself. He manifested to all that it was possible so to realise our relation to God that anything else might more easily appear matter of doubt than this; and whilst he was among us this faith was spread abroad by a sort of contagion; it was believed in by many because it was felt by him. Since he died, the need for some such incarnate expression of a filial attitude in humanity has grown with every year. The assertion that such a filial attitude is impossible has been elevated into a dogma, and accepted by the representatives of the intellectual world; while the representatives of the religious world are weakened by its influence, though they try to repudiate it, and express a timid hope where he uttered a conviction certain as a memory. How often, when confronted with the withering power of confident negation, have those who can recall the glad triumphant accents in which he repeated the Creed, longed to hear once more that tone of half



surprise, that curious hurry almost as of a sudden relief, as if every time those words were repeated he awoke afresh to the conviction and delivery of some wondrous message new in its infinite meaning every day. And these miss that influence all the more because they have missed it so long.

An account of his influence not only begins with a description of his theology, but is almost completed in such a description. His attitude to man was transparently dependent on his belief in God; the social aspect of his nature reproduced and illustrated the central facts of its deepest relation; the strength of both was identical, and so was any weakness discernible in either. It is the main object of this sketch to bring out the connection between the two, and such a preliminary outline of his life as may be necessary is easily condensed into a few sentences. His life, contained within the first three-quarters of our century—than which he was younger by five years—was spent, after his boyhood, almost entirely in London; his curacy near Leamington (1834-36), with which his clerical career began, and his professorship of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge (1867-71), which closed his life, being the only exceptions. Hardly any clergyman equally important in the history of religious thought ever failed to attain some higher dignity in the Church, no one ever did more to avoid all possibility of such an event. There are men who are quite indifferent in the face of promotion, and passive as to all that concerns it, but he set himself against it as if he had been his own spiteful enemy. ‘If ever I am to do anything for the Church it must be in some subordinate position,’ he wrote to his brother-in-law, Archdeacon Hare, when the latter urged him in 1843 to become a candidate for the principalship of King’s College on Dr. Lonsdale becoming Bishop of Lichfield. ‘The moment I am tried in another, I shall have the mortification of hearing principles which I hold most sacred derided from the feebleness of the person who should be the practical expounder of them’ (vol. i. 356). ‘I am sure you meant the letter in the *Pall Mall* most kindly,’ he wrote in 1870 to a friend (the late Bishop of Argyll) who was trying to bring forward his

claim to a canonry or a deanery, 'but may I be permitted to say that the only part of it which gave me real pleasure was the announcement that there is a "vow registered in heaven" against my promotion. . . . The Prime Minister would, I think, be utterly wrong if he promoted me' (vol. ii. 616, 617). His three London posts—the chaplainships at Guy's Hospital and at Lincoln's Inn, and his incumbency at Vere Street—represent a modest progression; the last being a living of some £500 a year. By its situation in the focus of a medical neighbourhood, it may have somewhat brought back his early associations with Guy's Hospital, and it certainly affords one of the congregations which a clergyman, desirous of intellectual sympathy, might most wish to address. These changes contain all that can be said of his life contemplated merely from the outside, while the long list of his works contains the record of an industry which it does not exhaust. The education of women, now so popular and fashionable an interest, takes its rise from his exertions at a time when Tennyson's *Princess* threw a shadow of absurdity over the notion of a Female College; while the closely allied project of colleges for working men was set by him on an equally firm basis, if not equally rapid in its extension; and the co-operative movement, now so successful, must be associated with the societies set up by him in 1849.<sup>1</sup> His part in the controversies of the day was an important one; he has left his trace on the popular theology in its deliverance from the dogma of endless misery; but this is the part of his history we feel least tempted to dwell upon. He was, in controversy, often vehement, sometimes irritable, and not always just. If he had been more conscious of his own importance, we believe he would have avoided some of these errors; but we have no desire to hide his faults, and must confess that they came out in that part of his literary activity of which the world knew most. It was not, however, the most characteristic, nor the most fruitful part of his activity; and although his work must be

<sup>1</sup> In none of these cases, we believe, was the *idea* absolutely original to him. But all practical importance was so entirely due to his effort that we let the words stand as conveying substantial truth,



judged as a whole, we hasten to that part of it which we believe to be as much more abiding as it was more full of an actual revelation of his own character; only leaving it as our suggestion that his biographer would so far follow our example, in the probable contingency of his bringing out a smaller edition, as to condense largely his account of the Jelf and Mansel controversies. But we feel in all that the background supplied to our previous knowledge throws a softening light over much that seemed harsh, and by reminding us of what it is now so difficult to remember, Maurice's strange, sincere opinion of his own unimportance, enables us for the first time to judge fairly of his polemic attitude.

The significance of his Unitarian parentage, which has sometimes been misinterpreted, cannot by any reader of this biography possibly be overlooked.

I have (he says in a letter to his son, vol. i. 13) been ashamed of my Unitarian origin, sometimes from mere vulgar, brutal flunkeyism, sometimes from religious or ecclesiastical feelings. These I now perceive to be only one degree less discreditable than the other; they almost cause me more shame. . . . For I now deliberately regard it as one of the greatest mercies of my life that I had this birth and the education which belonged to it. . . . It has determined the course of my thoughts and purposes to a degree that I never dreamed of till lately (*i.e.* within the last ten years of his life).

And again (p. 41)—

The desire for Unity has haunted me all my life through; I have never been able to substitute any desire for that, or to accept any of the different schemes for satisfying it which men have devised. . . . I find in the Trinity in Unity the centre of all my beliefs. But strange as it may seem, I owe the depth of this belief in a great measure to my training in my home.

It does not seem strange to us. Not only does the positive portion of the first faith remain, but the positive portion of the new takes a different meaning from having been once doubted, or at least from having been seen against a background of denial. The belief in Three Persons in one God may be held as the most arid dogma,



as devoid of all import for human interests as some speculation on the Fourth Dimension; and this is the aspect which it has generally worn, both to those who have never doubted and to those who have never believed it. But when from this misty void there emerges to the spirit of man the true meaning of Divine relationship, as the ground of human relationship, then this mysterious dogma is discovered to be at once the most practical of all moral principles, and the clue to man's highest ideal. The event by which each one of us owes our relation to a human being is then seen as the temporal expression of some relation independent of time, and all which this relation at its best can develop and express in humanity, as the reflection of some transcendent reality which existed as a type of human rightness before a human being was created. Human relation then takes a new meaning. We are taught, as Colonel Maurice says his father was (vol. i. 127), 'to look upon the order of God as founded on relationship.' Kindred ceases to be a mere accident of time—it is an outgrowth of something eternal. Goodness becomes in a new sense divine. He who looks up to a Heavenly Father apart from any Divine Son, may indeed feel his own tenderness to his sick child a feeble copy of that which has appointed every detail of his own career; but when he comes to any exercise of conscience and will to which we should properly give the name of virtue, when he is called upon for loyal submission, for patient endurance, for heroic resignation, he must of necessity feel that he is called upon to develop a goodness original to humanity, an independent rightness which has no pattern in the Divine Being. This was the heresy against which Maurice always protested—sometimes, we venture to think, with unsuitable hardness and vehemence. But all his positive statements of the truth seem to us full of priceless meaning.

I seem to see myself in a double mirror (he writes to his mother in 1831: vol. i. 130), one human, one divine. I could not have seen my image in one unless I had seen it also in the other. The self in both was equally disgusting, but then when I could

feel a reflection back, faint comparatively in the one, strong and permanent in the other, all became true and real again, and I have felt a happiness at times which is almost new to me. . . . It seems to me that all relations acquire a significance, and become felt as actually living and real, when contemplated in Him, which out of Him, even to the most intensely affectionate, they cannot have.

It is very difficult to drain away the effect of whatever is hackneyed in such language, and make it felt as an utterance of definite truth, truth larger than the intellect, and therefore incompletely grasped by it, but still truth as distinct in its meaning as some assertion about the physical world. That it was so to Maurice was in some measure due to the fact, not that he had ever been a Unitarian—for that, as his son says of him (vol. i. 64), he never could have been after the time at which a child's expression of faith is simply the reflection of words put into his mouth—but that he had to make his convictions clear against a background of Unitarianism, and justify them to Unitarians.

But hitherto we have spoken rather of a dualism within the Divine Being than of a Trinity, and it is possible to go so far and no farther. Those who stopped here (and some dear to Frederick Maurice did stop here) seemed to him to lose a part of truth just as vital as that which they accepted. He would have declared that the influence of a Holy Spirit was as much a fact in the moral life of humanity as was the work of a Divine Son; and it was a part of his conviction that the age in which we are living is in some deep sense the dispensation of the Spirit. We are anxious to make this assertion emphatic, and yet we are unable to add that this part of his faith was set forth with the same force as that on which we have just dwelt, or that it had the same influence on his whole being. We would allow ourselves a few words of explanation. All human relation is, must be, in some sense mirrored in Divine relation when once we admit that *Divine relation* is an expression with any meaning. The Divine Son gives a new sacredness to the bond by which parents and children are united into one family, but there is another bond



which, as we see it in human beings, is in some respects the polar opposite of this. A true parental feeling knows no preference; not that father or mother can love many children exactly alike; but, in proportion as the brooding parental instinct, attracted in any special degree rather by need than by merit and shared without being diminished by any adopted child, changes into a friendship moulded by common tastes and heightened by special approbation, it ceases to be in any special sense a type of the relation of God to man. But the Scriptures recognise a type of the Divine relation to man in other human relations than that of fatherhood. That intimate knowledge of every idiosyncrasy which Prophet and Psalmist declare in their yearning cry is among human beings associated only with preference—a preference which cannot share the inclusiveness of parental love without shocking the deepest instincts of our nature. ‘Thou knowest my thoughts long before’ is an expansion, not of any filial confidence, but of another kind of intimacy altogether. And it is that closeness of union among human spirits from which each man or woman must exclude all but one, which is felt, perhaps, the least inadequate type of the union between the human and the Divine spirit. The limitation which is of the very essence of the human relation, which it becomes something hateful by losing, can be no part of a relation between the human spirit and God. And yet there is so much in this individual relation to a Divine Spirit which recalls it, that it seems to belong to the same region of silence and mystery, and it would be as unfitting as it would be difficult to elaborate with any attempt at logical distinctness the meaning which we would express in saying that as there is a common relation to God in His Son, so there is a selective relation in the Holy Spirit—selective not in the sense that it includes some and excludes others, but in the sense that it demands an equal and similar predominance, and that in some natures it becomes a subjective reality, while others never are awakened by any part of their experience to a knowledge of what it means.

We are not aware that these brief suggestions contain



any single statement which Maurice would have denied. But they refer to a region he entered without sympathy, and they are made here as explaining whatever was defective in his influence. He had a great shrinking from whatever was individual, whatever might be regarded as an idiosyncrasy. We can fancy that at some time of his life he must have been peculiarly impressed by the dangers of an individualising type of religion, of any kind of effort to track the dealings of God in those facts of life which are true of one person and not of another. And we may say of him, as he was fond of saying of every thinker, that he would have escaped this characteristic limitation if he had been truer to his characteristic principle. If he had held more firmly to his own strong belief that choice of this or that man or race for any especial privilege was an election of one for the sake of all, he would have felt more interest in any impartial attempt to discover the meaning of these peculiar appointments in individual or national destiny. A person whom he revered, and whose appearance in these volumes will form one of their strong attractions to a few readers—Thomas Erskine of Linlathen—was once asked by a friend what he regarded as the peculiar element in the history of the Hebrew race; in what sense the narrative of the Old Testament seemed to him inspired more than any other truthful history was. ‘The history of the Hebrew race,’ he answered, ‘is the type of the history of an individual soul in a sense that no other history is.’ We are sure that Frederick Maurice believed that also; yet it would have been very difficult to put the statement into words that he would have agreed with, and the reminiscence is introduced here in order to give definiteness to our endeavour to describe a gap in his religious teaching. The moment this statement or any statement that pointed out peculiarities in the religious history of a nation or an individual became more than a brief hint, there was something in it that repelled him. Hear him, for instance, criticising Alexander Knox to the present Sir T. Acland—

The only way in which I can venture to speak of him except in the way of humble respect is as to the effect he produces on

myself. . . . Contemplating him in this light merely, I should be inclined to complain of a dangerous tendency to esoterism and exclusiveness; not indeed to sectarian exclusiveness, from which he is quite free, but to a kind far more attractive, plausible, and snaring. I cannot meditate upon the 'Our Father' of the Lord's Prayer . . . or upon the words 'to the poor the gospel is preached,' or upon the words 'I am a debtor to Jew and barbarian, bond and free' . . . or upon the idea of the Catholic Church, without perceiving that there is something in his all individualising spirituality—graceful and exquisite as I confess it to have been—which is not strictly after the mind of Christ (vol. i. 171).

Surely an 'all individualising spirituality' sets no limit to the influence which reaches each *as* an individual. The sentence is a fair specimen of that confusion of individuality with exclusiveness which blurred a good deal of his teaching.

Some readers may remember the 'bed-ridden woman' who was always being introduced to us as the infallible arbiter of spiritual problems perplexing to the minds of scholars and profound thinkers, generally in order to rebuke the pride of our intellect, but nearly as often that she might reflect upon our spiritual exclusiveness. Why, one was tempted to ask, was an ignorant pauper more of a specimen of catholic humanity than any one of Maurice's readers? The instance that recurs to the present writer most forcibly of spiritual joy *was* a bed-ridden woman, quite as strongly contrasted in her intellectual condition with schoolman and scholar as Mr. Maurice could have desired. But are we obliged to say that because God gives this joy to an ignorant pauper, He gives it to all? that nothing but a mere exercise of choice is needed to awaken it in every one of us? It seems to us that to say this is to be unjust to some of the purest and even some of the holiest of those who have ever sought the truth.

This horror and dread of the region of idiosyncrasy was shown in many ways. It impressed his character with a certain monotony. It seemed occasionally to take from spiritual truth something of its inwardness. For instance,



there is an interesting reference in the Life<sup>1</sup> of his friend, Samuel Clark, to a conversation in which, in answer to a quotation of the text, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you,' he replied, 'And in a very important sense it may be said "the kingdom of England is within you."' There are few persons who would not feel it somewhat disappointing to have to believe that these senses were the same. It narrowed his intellectual sympathies to some extent. 'Hutton psychologises too much,' we remember his once saying; not the least meaning that there was anything bad in the psychology *as* psychology, but only as one might say that so and so walks or reads too much. In any other region of truth no one would have been more indignant at this kind of mere quantitative criticism. But it was not only his literary sympathies which were thus artificially narrowed. Where this fear of individualism did him most injustice was that it sometimes made him, the most sympathising of men, repulse those who sought his aid, and who felt, on such occasions, like an invalid who, having described his disease to a physician, is informed with much emphasis that fresh air is a necessity to good health. This kind of general statement, in answer to an individual expression of difficulty, gives an impression of want of interest that is more chilling than any dissent, and even than a good deal of disapproval. The impression was most misleading in regard to him, but it was quite inevitable. Every one who has his horror of meting out Divine truth with any attentive consideration of human peculiarity, every one who, as it was said of him by one who knew him well, 'touches the concrete as a bird dips its wing into the water,' must sometimes appear unsympathising. And this same feeling was a little evident in his whole social attitude. Who that ever knew it has forgotten his greeting—that eager stooping movement, that outstretched hand, that sweet smile, that fullness of unaffected sympathy in the inquiries after all whose welfare was a matter of peculiar interest to the

<sup>1</sup> A modest but valuable little memoir, full of most instructive references to Maurice, and which might well be read as an appendix to the present volumes. Macmillan, 1878.



person whose hand he grasped? They recur with the assurance that he who remembers them stood face to face with one ready to open his arms to all mankind, hailing a brother in the most insignificant of its members, and needing for a special attraction actually nothing but the discernment of some need that he could meet. And then this sudden sense of delightful glow would be succeeded by a little flatness, a sense of slight embarrassment, a minute's awkward consideration what there was to say. It was not that he was dwelling in the depths, and social intercourse recalled him to the surface. It was that he was dwelling in the universal, and social intercourse recalled him to the particular.

But as we write the words, how much crowds on the memory that seems to make the ungracious limitation false!<sup>1</sup> No sympathy was ever more sustaining than his. If in intellectual perplexity his aid was sometimes disappointing, in all personal trial, in every variety of affliction and distress, his neighbourhood was indeed 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Could those who heard the words that made pain seem so wonderfully less painful now recall them, apart from the look and voice that gave them some wonderful untransferable meaning, they would perhaps be hindered from repeating them by finding how simple they were. Yet now, after the lapse of long years, some such simple utterances must recur to many with the associations of a vista heavenwards opened from the depths of hell. 'I know it well,' he always seemed to say; 'I have so erred, so failed, that bitterness is no stranger to me.' And ever afterwards the trouble in which he had appeared as a neighbour was touched with hope. And then, too, if ever he became aware of having disappointed a seeker, with what marvellous humility he sought out the applicant and strove with keen self-accusation to remove the sense of repulse. He says (vol. i. 266) in a letter—

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, some such reminiscence as that expressed by Samuel Clark in the little memoir we have quoted: 'F. D. M. was instructive,' writes Mr. Clark in 1835, 'in showing me that I was wrong, and *re-introducing me, so to speak, to myself—the self of reality and childhood.*' Mr. Clark was the Quaker to whom the first edition of *The Kingdom of Christ* was addressed.

My own nature is very prickly and disputatious, but it has caused me such bitter present pain from the conflicts into which it has brought me with others, and such remorse in the retrospect, that I hope I am now become more watchful and determined, as far as in me lies, to live peaceably with all. One can find enough that is not good and pleasant in all; the art is to detect in them the good thing which God has put into each, and means each to show forth.

A vehement nature, combined with a certain sluggishness of attention to the exact shade of meaning in the view opposed, does produce a very prickly disputatious effect, no doubt, and is sometimes more irritating for the moment than actual unkindness. It is in looking back on a life that one sees how different the two things are.

And then, although this distaste for exact focussing of individual attention must be confessed to have weakened his influence with some persons, there can be no doubt that in a man so wonderfully gifted with a power of sympathy, and unprovided with the average power of self-defence from unreasonable claim, this dread of any individual religious intercourse, anything that savoured of religious direction, was a necessary barrier against much that was perplexing and unsuited to form a part of the work God had given him to do. Every one, we presume, who had ever known him would feel that his most marked characteristic, as compared with men of equal distinction, was his wonderful humility. The least famous of mankind is not more accessible than he was. There was never with him any of that latent sense of 'my valuable time,' 'my important claims,' which is felt behind so many well-chosen phrases of defence in men of mark. An allusion here (vol. ii. 289) to the way he would hurry to the roof of an omnibus to make way for some old apple-woman in the rain must have recalled to many of his friends the annoyance which they remember feeling, after having expressed some trifling wish in his presence—an address to be found in the Court Guide, or a letter to be taken to the post—at seeing him take upon himself the service they would have deputed to a servant or a school-girl. If, with all this abounding liberality, this wonderful



power of sympathy, and the exquisite respectfulness which made even rebuke from his lips—if only it was not indignant—gracious and soothing, there had not been a certain zone of chill around the most intimate part of his nature, his life would have had no shelter and no rest.

His dread of all individualising attention became, on one side of his nature, a dread of judging, for which all who have in any degree learnt from him must always feel deeply thankful. ‘Of all spirits,’ he writes to his mother (vol. i. 129), ‘I believe the spirit of judging is the worst, and it has had the rule of me I cannot tell you how dreadfully and how long.’ Words which surely must have been true, for he could have made no insincere confessions; but they must have meant something that ordinary minds cannot enter into. Worldly, easy-going men give an impression of indulgence almost as great as his, so long as their own personal comfort is not concerned; but a standard so high, and a judgment so lenient, we have rarely seen in man or woman. He may, indeed, be said to have united the woman’s aspiration to the man’s leniency, and it was difficult when one came in contact with either of these things to remember the existence of the other. But it must be added, that to the dread of judging his fellows in their ordinary dealings with each other, perhaps carried to excess, might be traced the exaggerated vehemence in his condemnation of their theological position where he thought it wrong, which may prevent the world from appreciating this part of his character. The spirit of judging may clamour for Christian baptism and enlist itself under Christian banners just as any other natural impulse may—as no one knew better than Maurice. Still it must always remain an impressive lesson to have known one man who united his lofty moral ideas to his indulgent judgment of individuals; and all the more because he was quite capable of severity, while severity to individuals could cost so much to hardly another human being as it did to him.

His desire for Unity will be found the clue to every relation of his life, in its strength and its weakness. As it



brought him to a belief in which he escaped the division of God's goodness and man's goodness which he found among the Unitarians, so it fixed his position among those who shared with him that belief. It is illustrated in what we discover from these volumes to be an important part of his mental history—his relation to the High Church party. Perhaps the most distinct thing we can say about him which should be free from all risk of misconception in a mere external estimate, is that he was emphatically a man of no party. Yet if we were forced to give him any party name, we should feel it least misleading to call him a High Churchman. And half a century ago this would have been still more true. His Oxford years (1829-1832) found him at a much later than the usual undergraduate age; and one whose splendid poetic shrine will preserve the memory of a life of brilliant promise to all generations—Arthur Hallam—then wrote of him that 'the effect which he had produced on the minds of many . . . will be felt, both directly and indirectly, in the age that is upon us' (vol. i. 110). The High Church party, then in their early spring, must have joyfully hailed such a possible member; and the bitter disappointment he felt at the breach with them shows that to some extent the hope must have been shared by him. (See an interesting account of *A Walk to Clapham*, vol. i. 186, which reads almost like an allegory of some Pilgrim's Progress to the antipodes of Puseyism.) Almost every doctrine they held could be stated in a form in which it would appeal to his strongest sympathy, and also in one in which it roused his uttermost repugnance. Sacramentalism was to him as vital a truth as Sacerdotalism was a heresy: it would no doubt have been possible so to state the first belief that it should appear to him a dangerous superstition, and the second that it should take the aspect of a truth (though that would have been more difficult); still it remains true that the first was associated with all that attracted his sympathies, and the second with all that roused his fears and stirred his indignation. All sacramental theory, as laying stress rather on a symbol than an emotion, contains a protest against that individualising tendency which he so greatly mistrusted; and

although it is not necessarily guarded against exclusiveness, nothing can, in its essential meaning, be more universal than a doctrine expressed through the symbolism of food and of cleansing. Whatever brings these into prominence discourages all introspective tendencies, and leads us away from all that concerns the difference between one person and another. No doubt it may become merely external, but the negative advantage of the doctrine holds good even then. Sacerdotalism, on the other hand, was abhorrent to him on many grounds. He was the Jeremiah of his age—the priest who arose against the priesthood; and we have often wished that in judging them he had been forced into the indulgence which always came into his tone when he exchanged ‘we’ for ‘they.’ A few words he once said, in answer to a remark on a different subject, threw a strong light on his hatred of priestly assumption. A friend was speaking not of the faults of clergymen, but of the small connection that there appeared between a spirit of exalted piety and a high moral code—of the apparent feebleness, in short, of religion to mould the character, so that its influence should be perceptible to the secular world. ‘Oh yes,’ he said, in a tone of mournfulness his hearer will never forget, ‘there are no words that more come home to me than those of Chrysostom, “I marvel how a priest can ever escape damnation.”’ He could not hear of a high ideal of holiness without thinking of a priestly ideal, nor of a guilty failure in commonplace secular rightness without thinking of priestly failures. The true priestly ideal was so lofty a one in his eyes, that in actual life he was for ever turning to the priestly standard as the type of all in humanity that was weak, and hollow, and even hypocritical. He was, we think, often unjust to his order. He never could forget that he was one of them; they all came under the shadow of his self-accusation. He laid to their account much of the popular rejection of Christianity, which had no more to do with the faults of the clergy than it has with the faults of the papacy. He started with the belief that the craving after God is as natural to humanity as the craving for air or light is, and he inferred



that where this craving was changed to repulsion it was the fault of those who in the eyes of the people represented the messengers from a divine world. And thus a certain personal exaggeration mingled with his horror of any priestly claims, and that which was most obviously characteristic of the High Church party was also the beacon-light that at once diverted the course of his voyage.

His relation to them must be regarded from yet another point of view. It is most important with all men, and above all with one of his tendency to take up the unpopular side, to remember what current opinion formed the background to their teaching; what form of error seemed to them dangerous. To the reader of our day there may seem a somewhat extravagant fear in the minds of all contemporary opponents of the earlier High Church movement of our century. But in the interval between the French Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 it was the form of religion which was interesting and fashionable, and its power was mighty, not only over its loyal subjects, but also over its successful rebels. They felt its influence long after they had repudiated its authority. He would trace that influence in the minds of such men as J. A. Froude with a certain indulgence for whatever weakness he connected with its source. 'You must expect these views of truth,' he would say in effect, 'from men who have been taught their early creed, and who have repudiated it.' He had still a lively sympathy with the early creed, and also with the recoil from it; and both feelings will be brought home to the readers of these volumes more forcibly than by his published teachings. No one can read the earlier letters in the first volume without perceiving how strongly he was inclined towards asceticism. In the matter of fasting, we are informed (vol. ii. 290), his practice was strictly in conformity with High Church views, though so carefully hidden that many of his friends will learn it here for the first time; and there was a deep craving in his nature after everything of the nature of penance, sometimes taking a somewhat comic form—as once when, in a discussion on corporal punish-



ment at schools, he lamented that he, being brought up at home, had never experienced it. We see the strong influence both of this attraction and repulsion when we turn to his attitude towards the Evangelicals. What is best in them is exactly that individualising tendency which he so peculiarly dreaded; but, on the other hand, Evangelical doctrine roused a feebler protest in him than High Church doctrine did, because his opposition towards it was diluted by the fact that the Evangelicals were on the losing side all through the years of his mature life. 'That is to say, you have seen the High Church party in blossom, and the Evangelicals run to seed,' he once answered a friend who spoke against them; and the words give a clue to his attitude to the High Church party that should never be lost sight of. In no circumstances could he ever have been found among their representatives. Nevertheless, if we must speak our mind, we confess that the least misleading view of his position in the Church would be attained by one who should specially consider his relation to High Church ideas and beliefs without ever forgetting that his chief dread was that spirit of priestly assumption which a High Church party must always be inclined more or less to encourage.

And, on the other hand, the most misleading view of his position seems to us to be that, generally accepted, which connects him with the party known as the Broad Church. He is not so far away from Cardinal Newman as he is from Dr. Jowett. Couple him with the first, and you contemplate a striking antagonism; couple him with the second, and you can only say, 'Here are two English clergymen who have both influenced their time.' All that is most characteristic of Broad Churchmen is the exact opposite of what characterises him. They may be described as the transition forms between the old and the new orthodoxy; they have inverted the old distrust of physical science, and take an attitude of extreme respect towards all eminent students of nature, to whose teaching they give a religious form, and thus set up a kind of *modus vivendi* between two parties who divide between them the

strength of the past and of the future. It is scarcely possible to imagine anything more remote from all that engaged his sympathies. He was not in sympathy with the old orthodoxy; he would, if he could have understood it, have been still less in sympathy with the new orthodoxy, and he hated a compromise. The convictions most deeply grounded in truth seemed to him to change to falsehood when they stiffened into orthodoxy. The creeds were held by him with an absolute conviction; we deliberately believe that no Churchman of this century pronounced them with such fulness of meaning, such depth of feeling, as he did. Nevertheless, he thought it possible that they should be used as the label of a set of opinions that were as far from the truth as the denial of every word contained in them. 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' And even where this label was attached to doctrines which embodied nothing he considered false in itself, still the mere fact that the revelation of God should be supposed capable of shrinking to the compass of something that man could hedge round with logical formulæ, and define as 'sound doctrine' or 'safe opinion,' this of itself was to his mind fatal error. And thus, though we believe that the early fathers and the Protestant reformers would both have recognised him as the most orthodox of his generation, he was in fact at issue, during the greater part of his life, with that which it recognised as orthodoxy.

When we turn to the new orthodoxy—to give the body of authoritative opinion grounded in the teaching of physical science and openly hostile or contemptuous to theology, a name which, ere long, none will be able to refuse to it—we are on ground which certainly cannot be said ever to have been the object of his attack, because he hardly came within sight of it. How he regarded it from a distance we learn from these volumes. 'Every hope I had for human culture,' he says in a letter which, among many other interesting characteristics, is memorable as being almost the last thing he ever wrote (vol. i. 183), 'was based on theology; what sympathy, then, could I have' (he means at the time of publishing *Subscription no*



*Bondage*) ‘with the Liberal party, which was ready to tolerate all opinions in theology, only because people could know nothing about it, and because other studies could be pursued much better without reference to it?’ If he had stopped there we should all have felt that he had described the Broad Church party quite as definitely as it is possible to describe a very heterogeneous body of men; but he goes on (pp. 183, 184): ‘The Liberals feel, and I feel, that we are not a step nearer to each other in 1870 than we were in 1835. They have acquired a new name. They are called Broad Churchmen now, and delight to be called so. But their breadth seems to me to be narrowness. They include all kinds of opinions. But what message have they for the people who do not live upon opinions, or care for opinions?’ It is a most significant fact that that question, asked concerning that body of whom he is popularly supposed the founder, should be the last sentence ever published from the pen of Frederick Maurice.

A general opinion, such as that which connects Maurice with the Broad Church, need not be true, but must be plausible. Perhaps it is sufficiently accounted for by the mere fact that he and they both rejected the popular belief which the opponents of Christianity are wont to represent as its central dogma—that of an endless hell. All that the lay world knew of him at the time that his name was most before the public was that he had been turned out of his chair in King’s College for denying everlasting punishment, and they did not take the trouble of going into his disquisitions on the meaning of the word *αἰώνιος*, or of understanding what it was that he denied or asserted. And there is no doubt that this event was an important crisis in the theological development of our country, or that it did throw him for the time into the same group as the Liberal party in the Church. That is the way men get labelled. But nothing is more fallacious than such grouping. It is an utter misconception of Maurice’s whole moral attitude to associate him with the judgment commemorated in an epigram which describes a certain judge as abolishing eternal punishment when he approached the end of his earthly career. Even what is



undeniable in such an association is misleading. It suggests a view of evil, now becoming extremely popular, as a mere unripeness of the moral being, which would be as untrue of him as it would be of Augustine or of St. Paul. And also it suggests a notion that religion is a sort of spiritual insurance against the risks of futurity, which was no less foreign to his mind. He was singularly opposed to the latter doctrine. We say singularly in the literal sense; we cannot call to mind another religious teacher who so consistently refused to contemplate the world beyond the grave. So much was this the case, that we learn from this Memoir (vol. ii. 537) it was even possible to doubt of his belief in a future life. But when all this is conceded, it still remains that he made it possible to declare, within the Church of England, that there is no reason to consider death as producing any change in God's attitude to His creatures; and not all the confusions connected with this fact should lead us to ignore its importance. Those who can look back to religious teachings before him and after him will feel, as perhaps no words can convey to those who only know the latter, the vast change that has come over the whole spirit of Christian thought since a belief in the doctrine of Christ ceased to be associated with a belief that this and that sharer of the daily meal and the daily task would, by a false step on a river's brink or the start of a frightened horse, be cut off from all hope for ever. And whatever Maurice believed, he disbelieved that. He never said he disbelieved eternal punishment. But that God's love should pursue the sinner in this world, and would cease to open any vista of Fatherly welcome to him when an accident or an illness dissolved his connection with the body, was what he disbelieved with all his soul. And it was a new event and a most important omen that one should disbelieve this to whom the invisible world is real.

But we may say more than this to account for the fallacious opinion which ranks Frederick Maurice among that party which we have described as the transition form between the new and the old orthodoxy. The

standard of 'right opinion' in our day has migrated from the inward to the outward world. Now we can recall no thinker of our day, except Carlyle, who was so entirely indifferent to theories about the outward world and to facts also. It has often been said since he died—and he thought it of himself—that what he cared for was fact. His reverence for fact is one of the few claims made for him which he was ready to make for himself. It is strange, but perhaps it is not unparalleled, that the only moral claim which the humblest of men should make for himself should be one that the verdict of an impartial posterity should set aside; but in this case we cannot doubt that it will be so, and it seems to us so important that those who remember a man with gratitude and love should not blur all ethical distinctness in the attempt to justify their devotion, that we will risk much that we deeply value in order to explain our adherence to this negative judgment. Of course there is an important sense in which every high-minded and honourable man has a reverence for fact, and in that sense it was eminently true of Maurice. He had more horror of falsehood than all but a very few men amongst those that have ever lived. And then, again, *fact* may be opposed not only to *falsehood*, but to theory; and this also he had a great dread of. His 'craving after fact' was to himself and his disciples a part of his horror of systems, a healthy and useful feeling in some respects, and certainly a characteristically English one. He always regarded all philosophy through the atmosphere of biography, and from being much less ready to judge men's acts than their beliefs sometimes fell into what we should call the superstition of regarding the latter region as less a revelation of God's judgment than the former is; while his views of philosophy were thus presented under a peculiarly human and living aspect which has brought them home to many who could have received them in no other form, and his *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* was once described by a man who had been brought up to regard his books as anathema maranatha, as 'the first book that had ever made him feel there was a living



man behind it.' But a hatred of lies and a dread of theories do not make up a reverence for facts. And nothing was more unlike the impartial intellectual receptivity which belongs to a reverence for fact than the strongly *selective* attention which characterised his mind. It is not enough to say that the spirit of disinterested accuracy—we mean, of course, disinterested in the sense of being detached from every interest except that of accuracy itself—was not characteristic of him. It is perhaps the only virtue he could not appreciate. His spirit felt the neighbourhood of a great truth as a mighty magnet, and, in the rush with which he would turn towards it, all sense of relevance was submerged. He did not the least blame those who, like the scientific men of our day, *altogether* neglect the central facts of our spiritual existence; he simply let them alone. But when he came upon any speculations occupied on the borderland, he was always intolerant of those who could not treat difficulties as mysteries. He invariably mistook importance for relevance. We are not wishing that he had been different in this respect; so far as it was a weakness in his mind, it was the shadow of that which was its greatest strength. But now to ignore this deficiency—still more to regard it as an *efficiency*—this is not required by justice to him, and it is prohibited by justice to others.

His position on this ground will be best understood by remembering him in connection with the great thinker to whom we have just compared him. Both Thomas Carlyle and Frederick Maurice were entirely indifferent to all those facts—the bulk now of what people call knowledge—which concern the outward world and the framework of man's bodily organisation. It would have been, we suppose, impossible for any man much younger than these two to have exercised so vital an influence on our time and drawn from it so little of that which is its dominant and absorbing interest. The two thinkers are, in this respect, landmarks of thought; they will blend for the eye of the historian with many an object intermediate between them and him, but they themselves



belong to the kingdom of which they mark the limit. They have no place on the domain ruled by the ideas of our time. So much may be said of both, and in many respects their position seems to us a comparable one; but we go on to a quality in which Maurice was more distinguished from Carlyle than he was from many other men, when we speak of the influence exercised by his extreme humility on all his views. The very fact that he personally had no interest in any subject, that he was completely ignorant of it, seemed at times a sort of claim, on behalf of that subject, for the kind of reverence that he gave to whatever was not himself. We recall a curious instance of this kind of reverence in a lecture which he gave on 'Mental Philosophy' more than thirty years ago. After speaking of the senses as the inlets of knowledge, he went on somewhat to this effect: 'It would no doubt be a great help if I could enter here on the physiology of the subject, and describe the mechanism by which our knowledge of the outer world is conveyed to us; but this my own ignorance prevents my being able to do.' To our mind this speech explains his whole attitude towards physical science. He knew nothing of it, cared nothing for it, *therefore* it was probably a most important introduction to the study of the truth which was his one absorbing object of contemplation. Perhaps he never perceived—perhaps he never admitted into that part of his mind where facts become the clue to principles—the point quite obvious in his lifetime, startlingly more obvious now, that the study of science did actually divert those among his contemporaries who gave themselves up to it from any interest whatever in that ultimate truth. It was enough for him that they were students of *a* truth, though a truth that did not interest him, to secure his belief that they must be in some way nearer than he to *the* truth, which manifests itself in many forms and speaks so many different languages. He was thus cut off from all hostility to the anti-theological movement of our day, partly by not understanding their point of view, and partly by not believing in it. So far as it originated in a study of the outward world he was

consciously and respectfully ignorant of it; so far as it resulted in a passionate denial of the inward world he was incapable of conceiving of its possibility. He was quite alive to the fact that the thought of God might rouse very different feelings in the human heart, that it was a spring of dread no less than of love, and of dread that shaded off into horror. But the possibility that it should mark out a region in which one had simply (like the member of Parliament quoted by Mr. Leslie Stephen) 'no interest whatever,' was as completely hidden from him as the chemical rays of the spectrum from the eye which rests on its last delicate hues.

His relation towards the aggressive, dogmatic science of our day was very nearly the same as Charles Darwin's attitude towards its aggressive, dogmatic theology. Charles Darwin once showed a friend, a paragraph in MS. on the religious instinct, with a request for criticism, in exactly the same spirit that Mr. Maurice would have done to a scientific friend if he had ever had occasion to write anything about science: 'This is something you have gone into and I have not; should you say this is the right version of the matter?' Every successor of Darwin has been more or less hostile to theology. Every predecessor of Maurice was more or less hostile to the spirit of impartial scientific investigation. We cannot say that Maurice's neutrality towards the spirit of impartial scientific investigation was quite as absolute as Darwin's towards theology, but it would be so trifling an exaggeration that we are tempted to make it for the sake of clearness. Even thus weakened the distinction is a very great one. The ideal teacher of our time would recognise this antagonism; to attempt to say how he would deal with it would be out of place in a review of the life of Maurice. But the next best thing for a teacher, after understanding completely that movement of thought to which he is most antagonistic, is to ignore it completely. And Maurice did ignore it almost completely. He was saved from any real antagonism to that movement of thought which is vaguely called Darwinism, by understanding it as little as a traveller



newly arrived in some distant land understands the purport of its most idiomatic and hurried conversation. He knew that science was an interest to many men. He thought that faith was the yearning of all men. He felt, therefore, that he was dealing with truths of universal interest, and since he unfortunately could not illustrate them with truths of partial interest, he had nothing to do with these latter truths but to leave them on that platform of respected obscurity which they occupied for his gaze by the mere fact of his being ignorant of them. His temporary abandonment of this position was the only thing about his career we are tempted to regret; but even taking it into account, we may say that few clergymen of the Church of England were in so favourable a position to meet the great shock given a quarter of a century ago with the first stir of the great movement that has since been associated with the name of Evolution.

Of course this attitude towards science was his weakness as well as his strength, although, on the whole, it enabled him to make his message distinct to his kind. So far as it was indistinct, we think it was because he departed from this attitude and entered on a region to which no inward instinct led him. But it is obviously a weakness, in some sense, for a teacher to be ignorant of the intellectual currents amid which he has to steer, and towards the close of his life his influence was very much narrowed by this ignorance. Its most injurious effect, however, was this. Among the young who were attracted by his influence there must have been many who, seeing that he confronted the intellectual difficulties of their day, and that they made no impression on him, thought he had solved them. They yielded themselves up to him with the belief that they had found a guide who would lead them through a tangled maze to a distant refuge. They saw that he found this refuge accessible, or at least they saw that every other sojourn was a mere excursion; and they supposed, therefore, that he could show them the way through the only path by which they could reach it. When, at the first experience of real perplexity, they



found that he was not accompanying them on their road, they were seized with a not unnatural disappointment. They came to regard him—to use his own words of those who took a similar attitude with regard to Butler—‘with what can only be described as a bitter discontent.’ They recoiled from the faith associated with what they fancied a disingenuous and ill-kept promise; and seeing how firm was his confidence in that *beyond*, which he found so near and they so inaccessible, deemed the difficulties *he* could not solve insoluble, and the region where he had promised them a home a chimera. And hence it has come to pass that some men who have been learners from one whose life was an exhibition of the power and meaning of Christianity intelligible to a peasant, and impressive to the most profound scholar, are to be found in the ranks of those who have most decidedly turned their backs on the truth he showed, not only with his lips, but with his life, and that the most shallow and careless attack that was ever made on him came from one who had known something of him and come near him personally at one time.

We have said that his was a monotonous nature. It seems impossible to put our meaning into other words; his nature was certainly the contrary of various. But the associations of the word are misleading. It does not seem applicable to a very profound and a very impressive character. And there was certainly in him a striking union of opposites in some directions. Some, for instance (we have cited such a case in a note), would feel all we have said of his dread of what was individual refuted by the memory of his friendship, though it will be accepted as true on the whole by those who knew him best; and indeed, a union of opposites is the characteristic rather of a deep than of a many-sided nature. We cannot pass over a striking instance of this union of opposites, in his attitude towards all physical evil. He regarded sickness as the shadow and type of sin, and yet as in some sense a spiritual privilege, a channel of some spiritual lore which every man was the poorer for lacking. It is instructive to observe how often a feeling becomes influential in

proportion to its contradictoriness. We are unable entirely to agree with either member of this antithesis. But, still, any one who can believe *both* these things—and Maurice did believe both most firmly—has a spring of wonderful power in dealing with the sick. He is on the side of the physician. He looks on illness as something to be fought against, not only in the sense that every one must so regard it, but more specially as the work of an evil, disorderly influence, the antagonist of God the Deliverer. This is at times (not always) a helpful point of view to the sufferer. Illness is a source of such varied misery, and of misery sometimes so little obviously connected with any physical cause, that the invalid does indeed at times find himself in contact with an evil influence—something that has to be resisted and abhorred, not merely endured. And then at other times that opposite view of illness expressed in the Visitation Service for the Sick—a view which discovers in all bodily sufferings the hand not of an evil spirit, but of a Father, chastening His children that they might be partakers of His holiness—this is also needed, and more needed, by many a life-long sufferer. And by nothing is it reinforced so strongly as by Maurice's strong sense of pain as the *teacher*. He looked upon these helpless invalids on their couch as privileged learners, standing far nearer to the teaching of the Heavenly Father than he who stood beside them and strove to echo back some part of the instruction which he could convey to them only as an echo. How it could be possible that pain should be both the channel of a special teaching and also the work of the devil was a problem which some passages in his sermons show to have come quite clearly before him, and a letter here (vol. ii. 258) shows that he recognised an apparent contradiction in his own views; but it was to his mind a mark of truth to contain an apparent contradiction, and he seems to have felt always as if a contradiction were explained when both its members were distinctly stated. He never troubled himself to find the meeting point—never even could quite understand the position of those who were trying to do so.



This, we should say, more than any of the grounds which his son has touched on in a valuable and suggestive chapter (vol. ii. 526)—though there is much to ponder on in all of them—was the reason of his being felt obscure. His sentences are all perfectly clear. We cannot remember one that any attentive reader would have the slightest difficulty in understanding, so far as the *words* went, on a first perusal. What made his whole drift hard to follow was that, sooner or later, his reader or hearer had to surrender for a time the belief that logical coherence was the test of truth. There is always in any sustained reasoning of his, a gap to be crossed, where no logical bridge is possible, and his follower must trust to the wing of his strong, imaginative faith. Perhaps, for instance, it would be possible to append to every criticism given in this article some single quotation from his writings which should make it appear erroneous. He was at home only in the region of premises. But apparent contradiction is a test of truth hardly less certain than real contradiction is of error, and it is worth while following a leader who is sometimes blind to the latter fact if he is always alive to the former. At all events, no one will understand Maurice who does not accept this as the constitution of his mind. We would connect the statement with what we have said of his indifference to science. Of course we do not mean that ‘the laws of thought as thought’—to take the definition of logic which Maurice himself preferred (it is that of Sir William Hamilton)—are applicable only on physical ground. But a complete moral truth never looks quite coherent from the outside, as a complete physical truth does. And whatever weakness there was in Maurice’s distrust of logical completeness, there was a great strength in that of which it was the mere distorted consequence—his determination to keep that faculty in man which lays hold on what *is*, unshackled by the more fallible decision of the faculty of inference. The habit of mind of which this resolution is a part is not favourable for controversy. But all that widens sympathy prepares the mind for the apprehension of truth.



We have compared him to his contemporary, Carlyle, and we think that many peculiarities of his nature would come out more clearly if the two were associated. But the thinker whose neighbourhood does most to explain him is neither a contemporary nor a countryman. The Socratic element in his mind has never yet been appreciated. Especially in his feeling about words he is most explicable to one who is fresh from the Socratic dialogues. The resolution, often so apparently perverse and irritating, never to accept the popular nomenclature apart from some definite standard—a resolution sometimes really degenerating into verbal quibbles—the endeavour constantly to seek for the true meaning beneath the slovenly average misconception, was an exact reproduction of the aim of every dialogue in which Socrates takes part. And it is also an endeavour which, in spite of all that we have said of his want of the scientific instinct, may be called truly scientific in spirit. Nevertheless it was as often hurtful as helpful to him, because it was mixed with a feeling that is essentially unscientific. It is an indispensable preliminary of every discussion that people should give up using words to which they attach no definite meaning, and much is to be learned from etymology; but we spoil the contribution which the history of language brings to the elucidation of truth when we allow ourselves to regard it as the key to truth. However natural was this habit of mind in a Greek who knew no language but his own, it is wrought up with the abandoned belief that language is the photograph of existence, instead of being the mere shadow of thought—a belief against which Maurice has left us some forcible protests, but of which he has also provided many striking illustrations. But we are trying to understand rather than to judge this tendency of his mind, and it was a part of his relation to one of the mightiest and most elevating minds which has ever swayed the history of thought.

We have introduced this notice with an anecdote, forcibly bringing home to the hearts of all who have ever entered into the meaning of what he taught the

influence he exercised on the spirit that confronts the invisible world. That influence is gathered up in his own commentary on the words of the dying Hooker, 'I go to a world of order'—his assertion that that sober anticipation more harmonised with the yearnings that turned towards that mysterious future than all the rapturous death-bed utterances which are more common. Now the words seem to blend with his own at a like summons—'I go to life, and not to death.' The world beyond the grave was not so much the object of his spoken contemplations as it has been of most holy men. His son reminds us—and, incredible as it may seem, the confusion is not inexplicable—that there were those who even questioned his faith in a future world. We recall a little fact which throws some light on the mistake. He was once spending the evening at the Carlyles' when the conversation turned on the death of a priest who had fallen a victim to his devotion to the sick of his own faith, and a discussion arose as to the degree in which the anticipation of a future life was a spring of such devotion. Maurice's view of that question will not be doubtful to any one who ever knew him. The word 'heaven,' in any sense of a *future* condition, was one of an odd little group, including 'the soul,' 'religion,' etc., which acted on him as the traditional red rag on a bull. To the surprise of the auditor of the discussion, it was Carlyle who on this occasion took the orthodox view. 'It's a great influence, the future life; we must not make light of it,' he said. Perhaps if he who then seemed to make light of it were now among us, in the maturity of his power, he would be converted to the sense of a fuller meaning in that warning. Not to a more firm belief in the future life, for truly that is impossible. He does not believe it now more than he believed it then. But it might be that if he knew more of the current of thought that, strong before he left us, is irresistible now, he would have been brought to a stronger belief in the *present* life—the life that belongs to the seen and the outward, the life that satisfies, the life that quenches the thirst for God. If one should arise who united this belief to his message, he would be the teacher of the age. But to imagine such a

combination is, perhaps, to suppose things united in this imperfect world whose union is kept for that which shall end so many a divorce, and in which it must be the fervent belief of every one who has learnt from him that he has learnt more and taught more than in that fragment of his being which can be commemorated in a memoir.



## THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN

THE following delineation of the character of a remarkable man has been attempted in accordance with the suggestions of some among the friends of the late Thomas Erskine, who have thought that those who knew him personally would value any sketch, however slight, which would serve to remind them of intercourse they valued. The present writer could not attempt to address a larger audience than that implied in these words. No doubt a true picture of his life would possess interest for many besides his personal friends, for he lived through a time of great mental development, and his influence on it in his own country has not been trifling. His books, all written about forty years ago, are the expression of a spirit with which the religious mind most characteristic of our day is strongly in sympathy; and in looking back now we can see that it was a lofty peak that reflected the morning light so early. An estimate of his influence in transmitting that light would form an interesting contribution to the history of religious thought; but it demands powers I do not possess and a space which could not here be accorded it. What follows is written for his friends, and cannot justify itself to those who are not already interested in him.

There are special difficulties in thus addressing those who share with the writer the sense of loss. It is difficult to speak without exaggeration at such a time, it is also difficult to avoid the opposite danger of dwelling too much on limitations. I should have been silenced by the sense of these opposing temptations and some others, but that the hope afforded of, in some degree, deepening and giving shape to recollections so precious to his friends,

seemed worth the risk of putting forth what may possess little interest for others. The attempt to give some record of a striking personal character when the chief material for that record is the impression left on the memory of friends, is often mistaken, yet it is natural that it should be made, and where the form is fugitive, failure is of little importance.

If Mr. Erskine had died thirty years ago, it is possible that any such memorial as is attempted here might have taken a different form, and been addressed to a wider audience. The volumes which appeared from his pen during the second and third decade of this century went through many editions (one of them reached a ninth in a few years), and exercised, no one can doubt, an appreciable influence on the course of thought in his own country. But in the thirty-three years which have elapsed since the last of these books—the volume on Election—was given to the world, that thought has taken other forms, and it is difficult now to put ourselves back into the position of those whom he then addressed. If we review the most striking movements of the thought of our day, we shall find that at the period here spoken of they were all in their infancy. Forty years ago the High Church party did not exist, and all that upheaval of thought which we associate with that movement, though a great deal is in direct antagonism to it, was only just beginning to be apparent. To be religious then meant to be an Evangelical. It must strike every one who turns back to the memoirs of this period, that people were then almost entirely divided into ‘the world’ and ‘the religious world.’ They either took an interest in religion as something specific and technical, or they did not regard it as a subject of thought at all. We meet with active and sympathetic minds, during this period, full of interest in all that concerns humanity, and many of them no doubt finding something valuable in the outward practices of religion, who yet, as far as their most characteristic utterances go, might have been Pagans. On the other hand, the language of all distinctly religious persons in this early part of the century, so far as we can judge from



books, has in it always something that would need translation, if it were to be made intelligible to ordinary people. Now no one would say this is true of the present day. Any one who has any religious truth to communicate, endeavours to express it in ordinary language; and, on the other hand, the kind of distant respect to religion, as a valuable set of technicalities with which the lay world need not intermeddle, has also completely passed away. It is difficult for us, therefore, to appreciate the influence of volumes which were among the first to protest against this divorce of thought as concerned with the ground of our being, and as concerned with every other subject of interest. We can hardly imagine the effect, at that time, of utterances that told of a redeeming love embracing all mankind, not in some vague technical sense, but in the literal meaning in which it is applicable to a mother's love for every one of her children. The discovery that love has not one meaning for God and another for man, that religion is not a web of legal fiction, that the powers exercised in the study of all history and all science find their highest exercise in the study of the relation between God and man—this is not an experience probably which a seeker of the present day would associate with the sense of relief. To feel through vital experience the truth of these things, must be about as great a deliverance from evil at one time as at another; but so far as they can be presented to us in words, the ideas are familiar. Forty years ago the ideas were not only unfamiliar, they seemed presumptuous heresy. It was said of the one of Mr. Erskine's books which has been mentioned above, by a Scotch clergyman, himself a great friend of Mr. Erskine (Sir Henry Moncrieff, who wrote the life of his uncle, Dr. Erskine), that 'it ought to be burnt by the common hangman.' How far Mr. Erskine was himself an agent in breaking through the hard Calvinism which was then thought orthodoxy, I have said that I am quite unfitted to investigate; but there can be no doubt that his writings were a channel through which many of those convictions, which are now common property, have entered into the spiritual life of our time.



It is not altogether easy to say why the last thirty-three years of his life produced no successors to these volumes. He was not only constantly occupied with the subjects therein dealt with, but was always ready to express the results at which he had arrived, and the circumstances of his life, unshackled by either professional or domestic ties, or those bonds of party which are felt by all who associate themselves with any ecclesiastical movement, would have seemed peculiarly favourable for giving a literary form to this expression. While bound to all mankind by a peculiarly vivid sense of all that is common to humanity, and bound to those with whom he had any spiritual sympathy by a special delight in this sympathy, he yet might have uttered his convictions as the convictions of an individual without considering whether any one else was compromised by so doing. He was free from even the bonds of an adhesion to his own uttered belief, and one instance of this fearless inconsistency is so characteristic of him that it may be given here. In the year 1830 some remarkable manifestations of what was supposed to be a supernatural influence took place in the west of Scotland, and Mr. Erskine was so powerfully attracted to those among whom they appeared, that he (though a most fastidious man in his personal habits) took up his abode for a time among the uneducated persons who formed the medium of this strange excitement, whatever it might be. In his *Brazen Serpent* he thus speaks of these manifestations, 'I cannot but tell what I have seen and heard. I have heard persons, both men and women, speak with tongues and prophesy, that is, speak in the Spirit to edification and exhortation and comfort. And I am compelled to regard these things as strong, confirming signs of a great approaching crisis, which I believe to be no less than the reappearing of the Son of Man upon the earth.' To this declaration he refers in an appendix to his book on the *Doctrine of Election* in the following words: 'Since writing,' the passage quoted above, 'I have come to think differently, and I now do not believe that the remarkable manifestations which I witnessed in certain individuals about eight years ago,

were the miraculous gifts of the Spirit of the same character as those of which we read in the New Testament. 'To some it may appear,' he goes on after a tribute to those in whom these manifestations appeared, of whose character his first opinion had remained unchanged, 'as if I were assuming an importance to myself by publishing my change of opinion, but I am in truth only clearing my conscience, which requires me publicly to withdraw a testimony I had publicly given, when I no longer believe it myself.' I think the humility and courage of these words will make every reader who cared for Mr. Erskine thankful to have them quoted here, as recalling to their memory qualities which they can hardly ever have seen more strikingly illustrated; but they are given in this place to exhibit his perfect freedom from that demand for consistency with an expressed opinion, which is quite as much an entanglement as the bonds of party. That with all these exceptional advantages he published nothing during the last quarter of his life, after having been the author of works which had a considerable influence during his earlier years, was by no means to be ascribed to any satisfaction with these works, or to a sense that he had said all he had to say. The truth was very much the contrary. He spoke of them in his later years with a great distaste, and never would allow them to be republished, while he was interrupted by illness in an attempt to give his latest thoughts to the world. He very much exaggerated, I believe, the extent to which the earlier works failed to represent this latest thought, but it is true that he had in this last period of his life entered on a new region, in which all that he had to say would have taken a very different form. It is hardly an exaggeration to affirm that every opportunity of intercourse, in the last years of his life, was used by him as a means of pouring into another mind the convictions which filled his own, or at least of attempting to do so, and what follows is an endeavour to reproduce the impression made on an individual mind by these conversations.

The starting-point of his train of thought was, to use his own words, that Christianity should be associated,



‘not with history so much as with science.’ That it took its rise in a certain set of events notified to us by trustworthy witnesses, no one could believe more distinctly than he; but he regarded it so much more as a revelation of laws than as a revelation of facts, that at times he seemed to lay very little stress upon the facts. His interest in all historical criticism was feeble; whether a particular event had or had not happened always seemed subordinate in his mind to the question which most persons would consider must come afterwards—Whether it illustrated any great principle?—a question, indeed, which seemed with him almost a test of fact. On the other hand, he was specially anxious to give his speculations a form which might commend them to scientific men, evidently feeling that, however different their conclusions, his method was much nearer to theirs than to that of any biblical critic. For the invisible world appeared to him to be the subject of laws just as open to investigation, and far more permanent than those by which the outward universe is governed, these laws forming the object of revelation, while the events by which they were illustrated, however important in themselves, might be accurately remembered without any real understanding of what was intended by them. He thought that those were hardly in a right attitude with regard to Christ who approached Him from the side of His historical manifestation in this world; at all events, this was not the side on which he discerned the full meaning of His presence and of His work. It was not as a particular person made known to us through an authenticated narrative, but as an Eternal Being, revealed through the very conceptions we were forced to form of our Creator, that we were to be led to the Son of God. He was a being witnessed by the conscience, quite apart from his revelation in history. There was a demand continually pressed on us by the conscience for qualities which, unless we believed in a Son of God, must be peculiar to humanity, and have nothing Divine in their nature. Now it was to him as impossible that we could possess any kind of goodness which had not been first in God, as it is that



in the world of nature force should be originated; and the constant demand on us for the filial virtues—for that attitude of spirit which, whether we call it obedience, submission, or faith, he regarded as the one sole necessity of our being—amounted with him to a positive demonstration of its existence in our Creator. The God in whom there was no place for submission, for humility, for obedience, seemed to him no object for our worship. We needed a Divine pattern or type—needed not in the sense of wanting it for our help or government—but needed as the plant needs a root. Apart from this Divine root, the idea of virtue would, he thought, present a contradiction—an actual superiority in man to his Creator. If man alone could obey and trust, then the highest range of our goodness would be something separate from the goodness of God. The eternity of filial existence was to him a law of that higher world of which the world of nature was a kind of parable, and the manifestation of this filial existence in time was a matter entirely separable from it, however closely the two were connected.

Now, starting from this idea of the filial God as a being made known to us through the conscience, it seemed to him that man's life on this earth took a different aspect from that which it usually bears in the eyes of religious persons. The phrase which elicited his strongest antagonism was the description of this world as 'a state of probation.' 'A state of probation!'—he exclaimed in one of his outpourings—'God looking at us to see what we are going to do! What nonsense that is.' The belief that we were under the education of a Father, seemed to him wholly irreconcilable with any relic of the other view. God could not be both trying us and educating us; He could not be both a Judge and a Father. No one could both take up the attitude which was demanded by his being on his trial, and enter into that calm confidence which was the appropriate spirit of a son. The laws of something much more permanent than nature testified to him of a Divine Being, who exercised in its fullest extent all that filial spirit which the Scriptures sum up in the word Faith. We, as springing from this root, were called upon

to admit fully to every part of our being the whole efflux of this spirit, which needed our mere receptivity in order to fill it all. But this was impossible while we retained any notion of being on our trial. So far as we were under probation, we were cut off from Christ. Indeed, the first approach to this life of Faith consisted in laying aside every feeling of being upon trial. The doubt, the anxiety, which were a part of the one condition, were positive hindrances to the other, barring the passage to that faith which, fully manifested in Christ, would manifest itself also in all who would accept his attitude, and in them alone. The sense of being upon trial was an obstruction which must be removed before the sap would rise from the root into the branches, and apart from that sap the branches could bear no fruit. He did not, of course, suppose that 'the judgments of God' were words without meaning. But the fact that these judgments were a part of our training, that their object in all cases was the education of the person judged and not the vindication of an abstract justice, or the result upon any other mind seemed to him to remove them from all the associations we have with the office of a Judge, and to make that word unfit to express the relation of God to His creatures. It need hardly be said (but any suggestion of his train of thought would be very incomplete without it) that what we call death was in his belief no interruption to this Fatherly training of our spirits, or that he believed that in any case it could be finally ineffectual. He felt that to limit education to the range of our short life in this world, to suppose that what we see here is a complete exhibition of the training which fits us to enter into the Righteousness of God, is, in fact, to give up altogether the idea of education, and return to that conception of a Divine love distinct from human love, a Divine justice distinct from human justice, against which his whole utterance was a protest.

It was the perception of this purpose in God which he associated with the word Faith. He thought that those grievously misinterpreted the whole meaning of the Bible, and specially the writings of St. Paul, who re-



garded Faith (as I suppose many did in his own country) as a kind of substitute for righteousness, appropriate to a fallen and imperfect condition, but different from that goodness in which we had been originally created, and in which we should be hereafter restored. *Pistis*—he liked to use the Greek word, to displace the fallacious associations which had gathered round its English equivalent—was simply the right condition of a creature. There never could have been in the past, there never would be in the future, a time when we should be ‘set right’ by any other act than the awakening of this receptive spirit within us. When Habakkuk declared, ‘The just shall live by faith,’ or, as Mr. Erskine liked to read it, ‘He who is set right by trust shall live,’ he was not making a kind of prophecy, or a declaration of a certain tribute which was rewarded by salvation, he was enunciating the great law of the dynamics of the moral world. And this dim vision of the old prophet, awakening to a moral Cosmos governed by fixed laws, was echoed with a fuller meaning by St. Paul when he declared that his ‘good news’ was the ‘dynamic force which set men right’;—thus Mr. Erskine liked to translate the words which he thought had lost their meaning for us as the ‘power of God unto salvation.’ The apostle took the place of the Newton of the spiritual world, declaring to us the one mighty principle corresponding to gravitation in the visible universe, which kept all things in order. And this great principle, declared by St. Paul, had been demonstrated when Christ, the man who lived entirely by faith, arose from the dead, because in Him the power of life was strong enough to overcome the principle opposed to life. His resurrection was the exhibition of the perfect triumph of Trust over Death.

It is not very easy, in a small space, to exhibit the wide divergence of this view of faith, as a knowledge of the laws of the invisible world indispensable to any successful action in that region; and the common view—especially, I suppose, the view common in Scotland—of the miraculous effect of a certain set of opinions, as title-deeds to eternal blessedness. Mr. Erskine was never weary of



trying to enforce the difference of the two. He would again and again recur to the inappropriateness of mere effort to produce that condition which was demanded by the conscience. A man might as well desire midnight to become midday, he would say, as endeavour to exchange spite or mortification for love. To see that we ought to love did not help us one step on our way towards loving. But this exhibition of love as the law of life, existing in God apart from the act of creation; of righteousness in God as identical with a love for every individual soul, and a purpose to communicate that righteousness to every individual soul quite distinct from the soft, good-natured indulgence which is so often associated with the word *love*, had, it seemed to him, an actual power to kindle in the perceiving heart the love we could never awaken by any exertion of will on our part; while it was demanded by a voice no human being could ignore. This once perceived, everything fell into its right place. We were 'set right'; our efforts were based on a knowledge of the laws of the unseen world, and ceased to be futile.

Such were the utterances which linger in the memories of his friends, with strangely varied associations of solemnity or oddness, with quiet fields and the shadow of waving trees, or with the little bustle of a dinner party, and the inappropriate accompaniment of clattering plates and desultory small-talk. The inner associations are as varied as the outer. Sometimes his words came home to his hearers like the resolution of a discord; sometimes amusement at the quaint inappropriateness of the occasion chosen disturbed the hearer's attention; sometimes weariness at the monotony of the theme was the uppermost feeling for the moment; and sometimes his eagerness for some instantaneous expression of delight made one feel that he expected words to take the place of things. 'Ah, you are not understanding me!' was his frequent exclamation, when his hearer, perhaps, let the often-repeated exposition pass in silence; and few traits of character recur with a more penetrating sense of moral beauty than the sweet playful smile with which on one such occasion he received his hearer's confession that the

sympathy, which had at first been abundant, was exhausted by incessant repetition. The same feeling manifested itself in a playful criticism on Socrates, after reading Jowett's translation of the *Dialogues of Plato*. 'I delight in his unblushing tedium!' he exclaimed, with a humorous glance at the person who had confessed to being weary of his own outpourings. 'Such impudent repetition as he allows himself!' The radiance of that sense of drollery that sparkled in his eye cannot be recalled, and the mere words are meagre. But it would be impossible to speak of him at all without dwelling on this sense of the humorous, which gave relief to the intensity of his demand for spiritual sympathy. I well remember how he would suddenly modulate from his deepest tone of feeling into his peculiar enjoying laughter, when, after his usual protests against the theory of 'life as probation,' he would repeat, with indescribable relish, a piece of natural theology from a sermon he had once heard. 'And what were rocks made for, my brethren? Even that mariners might avoid them.' 'That is my belief,' he would add, with a full appreciation of the Irish proceeding thus ascribed to the Creator; and his frank acceptance of the absurdity lingers in the memory like some subtle perfume, so closely does it bind the deepest and the lightest parts of his nature.

Perhaps it will seem to some readers that the manner in which Mr. Erskine's views are brought forward implies a somewhat exaggerated view of their originality. He was not a very wide reader, and I sometimes thought he over-rated the extent to which his views were peculiar. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than when he discovered that he had done so. He read with the greatest delight a tract by Mr. R. H. Hutton, in the series of *Tracts for Priests and People*, containing the views which were substantially his own (though arrived at quite independently of him, and at a time when I believe Mr. Hutton had never heard his name), and I vividly remember the expression of relief in his voice, when, after listening to something of the same nature, he said, like one who felt a heavy weight grow lighter, 'Ah, now I care less



that what I write should be published, since I see there are others who feel it.' He was urgent in season and out of season in impressing his views on any one who came in contact with him, because he believed them to contain the medicine for all the ills of humanity, but that they should be remembered as *his* views was a matter of absolute indifference to him.

If I were to venture on the natural though perilous attempt to indicate the kind of position he occupied by reference to some name better known than his, I should, though with much hesitation, select that of Coleridge. It would be of course absurd to compare the two men, but in some ways their influence was analogous. Each gave out his thoughts in what seemed the fragments of some magnificent whole, and were never more than fragments, and each occupied a position of sympathy with cherished beliefs which he approached from a side quite unknown to those who had been accustomed to cherish them. Each, I imagine the parallel might conclude, exercised an influence over thinkers of their day (of course in a very unequal degree), of which their published writings afford no measure. The name, at all events, is mentioned here to suggest at least superficially the kind of place Mr. Erskine occupied towards those among the thinkers of his day—and they were not few—who came at one time or another under his influence. But it was not so much by communication of thought—it was by a kind of manifestation of the invisible world—that he laid hold of those who came near him. 'Everything that reminds me of God reminds me of you,' was said to him in a letter by one of the deepest thinkers of our day, and one least prone to such expression, the late A. J. Scott. An unwise friend once repeated the words to him long after they had been uttered, and he turned away almost with horror, but it was an assertion that might have been echoed, I believe, by every one who ever knew him intimately. 'My soul is athirst for God' could have been said more truly by no man than by him, and it is difficult now ever to think of that after which he thirsted without recalling him.



His life recurs to one's memory like the sigh of an exile. He never took root in this world. All the power of suffering, all the exercise of thought, which most men spread over the varied intercourse of human life, and the hopes and fears of its 'business and desire,' were with him concentrated upon that side of our nature that looks towards the unseen world. It was not that he did not feel deep and lively affections; his friendships were all very deep and permanent. Two persons, both his contemporaries, and both of whom passed away in the early prime of life, were familiar to all who entered into any deep communion with him. One was his elder brother, of whom he used to speak with a change of voice and countenance that made one feel as if it could have been but a few weeks since the two were separated. 'Fifty years have passed since he went,' he said, a few years ago, 'and it seems to me as if it were yesterday!' This young man must have made a strong impression on others than his own family, for, many years after his death, General Elphinstone, our commander-in-chief in the Afghan war, on hearing Mr. Erskine's name, asked if he were brother to Captain Erskine, of such and such a regiment, and, on being answered in the affirmative, said, 'He was the best soldier and the best man I ever knew.' I shall never forget the voice in which Mr. Erskine repeated these words. The other person whose influence upon him was so deep and permanent that it was impossible to know him intimately without receiving a strong impression of her, was Madame de Staël's daughter, the saintly and beautiful Duchess de Broglie, whom he described as 'one in whom the world could find nothing to lay hold of.' He knew her at a later period of his life, and her influence over him had therefore a more mature character to work upon, though in other respects his brother was the exception when he spoke of her as having set almost the deepest mark on his life. These two strong affections are mentioned here as an indication of the permanence of all strong feeling in his nature. Since these two persons had passed away from this world, generations had come and gone, new interests had arisen, and old ones had grown dim. But the impres-

sion they had left on his mind had not grown dim; they were still distinct, living influences to him, always emerging from the depths of tender memory whenever he revisited the past, and recalled those types of divine love by which his life had been enriched and enlightened. There was something peculiarly appropriate to the impression made by him, moreover, in the fact that those he loved best should have entered very early into the unseen world, and that his love for them should, during the greater part of his sojourn here, be steeped in the awe with which we think of that unseen world, whenever it is turned into a living reality for us by the presence of those who have entered into our heart of hearts.

There were many others whom he loved—not in the same degree, but with the same kind of enduring, imperishable love—and the bond of a common humanity was so strong with him that it did not seem to need *preference* in order to bring out much of what we generally suppose the result of personal friendship. His most prominent interests lay in the region below all individual idiosyncrasies, and were shared with all. Nor must it be thought that he was incapable of appreciating others than those who responded to his demand for spiritual sympathy. His sense of humour, and his taste for all that was original and racy, was a bond with many whom this demand, of itself, would have repelled. ‘He is a *vernacular* man’ was one of his most frequent and characteristic expressions of eulogy, and he would ask, as a kind of test of a common understanding, ‘Do you know what I mean by a vernacular man?’ He himself afforded an instance, in no common degree, of the character which he indicated by that word—that which avoids conventional forms of thought, and speaks its own dialect. His reminiscences, for instance, of the Scotch Bar in the early part of this century, when he was an advocate, led him into a sympathetic recollection of some men who were anything but saints, and he never referred to them with that sense that between him and them was a great gulf fixed, which sometimes makes the allusions of religious people to men of the world so jarring. There was in him nothing of that hard exclusiveness



which we associate with the word narrow; there was the very opposite extreme to that spirit. He had an absolute confidence of the highest blessedness for every human creature which I never saw in any one else, and which was no mere doctrine in his mind, but its most vivid, animating principle. And yet with all this range of sympathy it would be untrue not to add that there was a sense in which he was narrow. Except where his sense of humour was touched, he too exclusively regarded his fellow-men as pilgrims towards eternity. The most solemn aspect of human life was too invariably before his eyes. Sin, and the deliverance from sin, were too constantly (though with the exceptions above mentioned) the objects on which his gaze was intently directed. He was at times aware of this conflict between the varied interests of a complete life and his view of the aim of that life. ‘Falstaff and Mrs. Quickly,’ he murmured once, more to himself than his companion, ‘one does not see how to think of them and of the Cross together.’ He would never have excluded the Shakespearian element; in his earlier years it engaged a very large proportion of his interest. But it was a decreasing proportion, and in his old age, when the mind most needs rest from arduous thought, he suffered from the want of light and varied interests. His friendships, tender and enduring as they were, were not of a kind to supply this kind of refreshment. His friends were precious to him, as has been said, as types of the love of God; the environment of earthly interests which gives a kind of intellectual exercise to love, had very little place in his feelings about them. If they suffered, his thoughts passed at once to the purpose with which that suffering was sent, he could never linger in the region of events and circumstances, and though it is true that he thus escaped much pain, yet the suffering of an intense strain on one part of the nature was probably greater than that of sympathy with the vicissitude of human fate, which he escaped. His friends could not but lament this unvarying strain. They sometimes thought that even the truths on which his mind’s eye was ever bent would have gained in force and distinctness if they had been seen against a



background of commonplace interests, and been more largely illustrated by the accidents of this transitory life. But now to wish this had been the case seems like wishing to lose the recollection of one of the most striking individualities we have known. This preoccupation with the interests of another life seems like the glass tripod that isolates the electric fluid; to imagine him brought into the circle of average wishes and expectations and occupations, is to remove in thought what made himself. He would have been a happier, he might perhaps have been a more useful man if it had been otherwise; but he would have been altogether another being from the man we knew.

He is one of those it is most natural to think of in the mysterious world that lies beyond the grave. He was never at home in this world, there was something in him that demanded a different atmosphere from ours. His realities all lay in the region we are tempted to consider unreal; the visible and tangible universe seemed to have no soil in which he could take root. There is a rest in thinking of him as having escaped from it, not only in that sense in which we trust it is to all the summons to a higher stage of development, but in that more special sense in which we may give thanks that one who long endured an ungenial climate is recalled to a region after which he has long panted and where he feels himself at home.

## LIFE OF CHARLES KINGSLEY

### I

ON the question concerning the interval which should elapse between a man's death and his biography, as upon most other questions interesting to mankind, there is a good deal to be said on both sides. The advantages of addressing an audience who supply keen interest in the subject are perhaps more obvious than the advantages of contemplating that subject under the mellowing influence of time, and it is not surprising that the interests of literature—generally strongly engaged, we think, on the side of delay—should give way to those which are more prominent in individual cases, though posterity can take less account of them. Nor could we say without qualification that the two interests may not be united. If we were to specify what we considered as the most favourable chronological perspective for a biographer, the two most popular biographies in our language—Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and Stanley's of *Arnold*—would suggest themselves to every reader as a confutation, and would at least suffice to force from us the confession that it is possible to satisfy at once those who would have known almost nothing of the man without the memoir, and those who bring to it a wide background of recollection and surmise. But though this has happened, we do not think it is likely to happen often, and a few striking exceptions do not shake our faith in the rule that if a biography is to be a contribution to literature, the writer must aim at supplying more than a crystallising point for vivid memories, and a response to eager and intelligent interest.

We make these remarks in no disparagement of the

volumes which have been absorbing so many of our readers, but as an indication of the point of view from which to regard them. It is not as the literary critic, at all events, that one of those they have riveted can speak of a narrative at which the graves have seemed to give up their dead. Fresh from such a perusal, it would be difficult to estimate defects in less unpretending workmanship than that which is here endowed with the enchanter's wand, and we must disclaim that approval of the work, considered as a contribution to literature, which might be the natural interpretation put upon the omission of all literary criticism. What the book may be for a generation to whom the things it speaks of are as dead as the Bangorian Controversy, for instance, is to us, we will not inquire. For those to whom it recalls the associations of a vivid past, it is one of the most interesting biographies of our time.

One more concession must be made to the ungracious spirit by which criticism is haunted. The book is interesting to its last page, but we believe our opinion that it is most interesting at first will be general. We cannot deny that it is so much the more faithful a representation of its object. If the word *genius* is to be applied to Charles Kingsley—and we think it is—the attention must be concentrated on the works of his earlier years. To a man's contemporaries this implies something disappointing in his life, no doubt. But History judges him simply by what his best is, whether his best comes first or last. There is a certain amount of accident in the development of genius; kindly influences may breathe on the plant in spring, and the rich promise may be belied by a withered aspect in autumn, but it may be that under the best conditions the fruit would have been worth more than the blossom. If the *Saint's Tragedy* finds but a feeble echo in the *Miscellaneous Poems*, if the picture of the strange, seething life of Alexandria which Kingsley made a background to his sketch of the Neo-Platonist virgin and martyr, had no worthy successor, we may learn from these volumes how much activity of another kind succeeded this phase of youthful achievement, and of activity perhaps incom-



patible with it. We know but little of the correlation of the intellectual life, and many of the spiritual activities which look like natural accompaniments are in fact rigid alternatives. In the inward world, as in the outer, power often only changes its form when it seems to disappear, and it may even be that we date a life's decline at the dawn of its deepest efficiency. But there is no denying that so far as we can make an estimate of the lives of our fellows, Charles Kingsley's was at its best in the glow of youth, and we would invite those who would do him justice to cross a longer interval than that which separates us from his newly closed grave.

The great charm of his character, so far as it did not consist in that magnetic quality which defies analysis, was, we think, the equivalent intensity with which he entered into the inward and the outward world. The elasticity and many-sidedness of perception which are thus manifested (qualities to which no small part of the enjoyment of intercourse is owing), showed themselves in various views of the same thing, as well as in the power to see different things;—the aspects of Nature were as much to him as her laws. While his descriptions of natural scenery tell of the brooding eye and the open heart, his taste for science witnesses to a kind of attention that few men find compatible with a keen love of beauty. 'It is so provoking,' said the wife of a geologist, in good-humoured despair, 'when I am looking at the light upon a distant hill, to hear him say, in a very pondering voice, "Ah, I see, the fault comes in there!"' The companion of all Kingsley's interests can never have had occasion for this playful reproach. The laws that mould our world were to him a rich bass, set to the melody of its varied form and colour; he could listen to the full symphony with undistracted ear, and with unwaning attention to the simple air or the complex modulation alone. We could not indeed say that he was able to convey in equal proportion these different kinds of enjoyment to other minds. Those passages in his books which bring even to many a jaded mind, incapable of appreciating these things at first-hand, the enjoyments and almost the sensations

associated with the outward world, are secure in perennial interest, and no one will say this of anything he has written about science. Still for himself, nature as the fountain of law was no less imperiously attractive than nature as the storehouse of beauty, and men who delight in it as the glorious picture-gallery and as the richly stored museum, and who have no sympathy with each other, might find equal sympathy from him.

These words describe a kind of activity that makes no small contribution to all the healing influences of life, if they were all we had to say. But they describe only half the spiritual compass of Charles Kingsley. He had wings for a chasm wider than that which severs the scientific and the poetic aspect of Nature,—for the great spiritual chasm of our day. But in saying that he was at home both in the worlds that eye hath seen and that it hath not seen, we must guard ourselves against misapprehension. The fact that those who in our day give themselves to the study of Nature lose their belief in what is above Nature, while in former days they acquired but a new illustration and support for their faith, might be described in very different words. Some would say that we have reached a point where the growing and harmonious certainties of the outer world contrast too glaringly with the perennial doubt, the increasing divergencies of the inner. They believe that the rising sun has driven us to blow out our rushlight. Others, who find this contrast explained by the distinction between the kind of truth which can and cannot be transferred from one intellect to another, may consider that the rising sun has led some of us to disbelieve in the stars. But as to the fact of a change, everybody, we suppose, is of one mind. Now there is no doubt that the noble-minded man of whom we speak cared vividly for both the truths of the seen world, and the truths of the unseen, and it was a sign of his many-sided and fearless spirit that he did so, but we cannot say that it was any sign of his power of thought. His writings are rich in many sources of teaching and help, and he can afford to have it said that a vista opened through the perplexities of the age is not one of them.



Men must see difficulties, before they can see beyond them. The problems that are set before us by the mere experience of life weighed upon Kingsley, doubtless, with as heavy a burden as they ever laid on any human spirit, and out of that dark experience he wrung the power to elevate and soothe many a heart full of filial yearnings that missed their expected response. But he never confronted the perplexities that beset the mind combining the intellectual life of our day with a higher life. He could not resolve the discord of Science and Faith, for he never heard it.

Still the fact remains that he was the one man eminent in our day who entered into the theories of Science, and the beliefs that if they are accepted at all claim precedence of all that we call Science. It is something to see that these views may be reconciled by a thoroughly honest mind, even if we are obliged to confess that it was neither profound nor logical. A person who does not see difficulties cannot judge whether they are large or small (though he often thinks he can), but he may measure their range for others by the approach he makes to them from different quarters. Kingsley felt all that we call Nature to be the medium between the spirit of man and one with whom he is called to enter into immediate relation. If it is possible to exaggerate the importance of this mediate relation—perhaps it is not—he did exaggerate it. But he never doubted that however large a part of what is Divine is revealed to man through the things we can touch and weigh and see, there is a wider region which we can know only through contact of spirit with spirit. Thus his reverence for a Will above Nature was raised on the pedestal of his reverence for Nature, and the spirit which is generally antagonistic to Faith in that which is supernatural, in him did homage to it. Hence his power to reach a variety of minds, hence the firm common ground on which he could plant his foot in his endeavour to bring men to a loftier standing. This power, if it had been joined to a profound insight that pierced the mists of doubt, would have made him a great name in the history of thought. But we doubt if his influence did not take a wider range in his lifetime as things were.



A reminiscence—perhaps trifling—seems to us to illustrate so much of the advantage he possessed in this power of approaching the minds of men from different sides, that we will confront the reproach of triviality by giving it:—‘What an unintelligible mystic Kingsley is!’ said a guest at some festivity, of which perhaps few partakers are now living; ‘I wonder if he himself understands his own writings.’ His hearer did not see the appropriateness of the description, and the conversation took a line on which the speaker had more to say,—a subject connected with agriculture. ‘There is an admirable article on that subject,’ he continued, ‘in such and such a Review; it throws more light upon it, and gives more practical suggestions concerning it, than anything I have read for years.’ ‘It was written by Kingsley,’ said the other—and the good man took refuge in his dinner. It was a startling transformation to find his religious mystic an authority on the practical applications of science! Here, we think, lies the secret of a large part of Kingsley’s power. The real test of truth to the average man roughing it in the world is,—How does this doctrine work? What sort of a character does it produce? What sort of a life does it mould? We are not saying that every one is as favourably situated for applying this test as he considers himself. We only say that it is, as a matter of fact, the rule according to which people do accept or reject any system of belief that is large and deep enough to form a character. And it is rare indeed that one who speaks to men of the hopes and fears that are independent of outward things can speak of these also; it is rare that a spiritual teacher can, like Kingsley, appeal to practical men in their own language, and blend as he did the belief he sought to impart with the life they desire to retain.

This remark should be associated rather with the robust practical side of his nature generally than with his love of science. There was a time, we imagine, when this taste, strong as it always was, had a powerful competitor in his mind—a competitor, we mean, in regard to the limits of human time and interest, and not in virtue of any inherent incompatibility between the two—in his political

sympathies. The account in these pages of the Christian Socialist movement of 1848 and onwards is somewhat melancholy reading, especially for those who can remember that dawn of rich and genial hope, and to whom Kingsley's words on April 11—'a glorious future is opening'—bring back feelings that recur with the distinctness of events. There seemed then a possibility of a kind of common life that experience has, we fear, shown not to be possible, at least not under present circumstances. It seemed then as if common aims might supply the want of all individual adroitness in adjusting intercourse to that break of continuity which people of different stages of cultivation are apt to feel in face of each other; and that sudden glow which made itself thus felt in common-place minds brought Kingsley's to a fervour of hope, that seemed enough to fuse and weld the most heterogeneous materials, and really did for a time bring them into close contact. We are rather magnifying the power of sympathy in his nature than depreciating his power of insight, when we say that he mistook this impulse of brotherly compassion and aspiration for Democracy. It is a great mistake to confound sympathy or pity with a political creed, but the confusion is natural. We have all known, probably, the kind of surprise there is in returning upon a scene we had thought striking, to find that what had impressed us was in reality a certain effect of light and atmosphere which had clothed the stationary and permanent objects of our attention in a glory not their own. Perhaps there may have been something of this surprise in Kingsley's mind when he turned to politics in his later years. The morning light was gone.

All the more interesting are those productions which embody this fervour of youth, with its perhaps transitory sympathies. The work of his which will live longest, we suspect, is *Alton Locke*. The biography of the Chartist tailor embodies what was strongest in Kingsley's sympathies, what was clearest in his insight, what was deepest in his convictions. We cannot but believe there are materials for history in that book. When the great storm of 1848 shook Europe and sent a tiny spirt to our sheltered island,



it was not because there was no discontent here, real and deep, that the hurricane sank to a squall. 'The Government was very courageous to make such formidable preparations,' said a public man, after the 10th of April; 'they must have known it would look as if they had made a steam-engine to kill a flea.' But there was deep anxiety in many manly breasts on that day, as there was, no doubt, bitter misery in a few at its close. That misery is painted with a master's hand in the pages of Kingsley's first novel, and the picture may well be an effective one, for there is no more potent stimulus to imagination than generosity combined with prejudice. Kingsley was a thorough aristocrat, and the tyranny of shopkeepers was that against which his whole nature was engaged, as the larger part of his nature was engaged against all tyranny. The picture has already the interest of history. The England of our day is less changed in the last thirty years than any other European nation, but it is changed. Much of the spirit then working in vague discontent has been absorbed by trades-unionism. Much has been allayed by a Reform Bill which has transferred the prerogative from a class Kingsley was inclined to despise, to one with which all aristocrats have much more real sympathy. But we are living now in that disappointing stage which surely follows on all enfranchisement, when unwearied effort and patient sacrifice seem to have failed of their aim, and reading between the lines of these volumes, we could fancy that something of this disappointment stole upon the mind of Kingsley in his later years, and a little deadened his political interests. At any rate, he never lost his strong sense of brotherhood with the most degraded of mankind. There is a pathetic little touch in his pupil's (Mr. John Martineau's) account of him, describing the expression of disgust with which he turned from his well-furnished breakfast-table, after at length overcoming his almost unconquerable reluctance to send away a wretched tramp; and we cannot doubt that the wretchedness of the outcast and the degraded, often weighed on his heart, with the feeling which manifested itself in that gesture of revulsion from the signs of comfort. We fancy we can discern some



such feeling—a dim, half-conscious sympathy with obscure suffering—in the strange pathos of his countenance, a pathos which haunts us even through this record of a life outwardly and inwardly so prosperous, and which, in the few sentences which record his wish for death, seems to escape from a murmur to a cry. We know well how much there was in his life unlike this,—how much that may make it seem absurd. But perhaps there are few men in whom the deepest part of the nature is not hidden beneath much that is utterly unlike it.

We have endeavoured to express in these lines the first general impression of the whole personality, as it has been half-produced and half-recalled by these volumes. On a future occasion we hope to return to the *Biography*, and by its help illustrate and supplement what has been said here.

## II

The critic of these volumes is tempted, by a suggestion as illusory as it is obvious, to lament in them the loss of a great literary opportunity. It is obvious that the biographer of so striking a representative of the third party in the Church might have set before his readers a well-centred picture of an important group, a picture of course not attempted here, and indeed rendered impossible by a point of view too close to allow of a background. A moment's consideration shows us that the portrait here portrayed by a loving hand, far from occupying the canvas, does but provide the best material for an artist who shall take his stand at the right point of view. We will venture on a few brief suggestions as to that part of the picture to which this record does not contribute, and will not shrink from pointing out those shadows, clear and transparent as they always were, which it could not possibly introduce.

The Broad Church was never a party, in the sense in which the High Church and the Low Church are parties.

We could hardly find greater spiritual diversity than between some of those whom we must count among its members, and should be much perplexed to point out any single view that was common to all. Still, we should consider it an unprofitable pedantry to refuse to use this designation for a body within the Church, which, dating its rise, perhaps, with Dr. Arnold, has embodied, on the whole, the liberal theological sympathies of the last forty years. The historian, whom we venture thus far to anticipate, may perhaps find some amends for the poverty of distinctive common principle which this description betrays in a wealth of resemblance which it cannot suggest. He may learn much and teach much by a retrospect which shall connect the nineteenth century with the first, and trace the various and pregnant analogies which connect the teaching of Arnold, of Coleridge, of most of those whom Kingsley honoured, and of Kingsley himself, with that school of which the best known representative is Philo the Jew. The appropriateness of such a retrospect is indeed forcibly suggested to the critic of the life of one who has done more than any writer to make the life of Alexandria vivid and real to the average English reader; and though we cannot here justify, we will not conceal our belief that it is only with such a background that the party we speak of will assume any real distinctness or unity, and find its true place in the history of thought.

Whatever difficulty may be felt in including within the ranks of a party so difficult to describe and so easy to misinterpret this or that individual does not apply, however, to Kingsley, for in a letter given here (ii. 129), he speaks of 'a synod of the Broad Church' as a body which would include himself; and a variety of qualities more obvious, and perhaps for the time more effective, than that originality of thought which he always disclaimed, certainly fitted him to be its prominent and characteristic specimen. He embodies the strong secular tendencies more characteristic of the Broad Church than are any opinions, while his picturesque, many-sided character brought him conspicuously before the public eye, and



made his teaching a channel of his faith to many and many a man of the world in every condition of life. We thus regard him as in one respect typically a Broad Churchman, for he was a link between the world and that party, the main, unquestionable characteristic of which is its sympathy with the world. He carried out most successfully that aim to which is owing whatever unity this school may be said to possess.

But an influence worked upon him which we cannot trace in any other important member of his party. There is no larger source of injustice than that which we commit to a man's creed in ignoring its element of protest. Half the controversies of the world would be ended, and little of their bitterness would remain, if men would but realise the suppressed alternative of what is chosen. The peril of failure here is brought vividly home to us in trying to estimate Charles Kingsley's attitude towards Asceticism, for we confess that it seems to us repulsive from more than one point of view; and if his heated declamation were the utterance of one still among us, it would seem to us impossible to speak of it without dwelling on its dangers. But the eloquent tongue is silent, and we are not, to confess the truth, anxious as to a possible successor in this particular crusade. The mistake seems to us patent. So far as it is impossible to trace the genesis of this feeling in his mind without expressing our own view, we must treat it as an unfortunate bias; but we aim as much as possible at putting ourselves in his point of view, and the aim is the more necessary in proportion to the effort it costs.

The Broad Church is not a reaction from the High Church, in the sense that the High Church was a reaction from the Low Church. Indeed, it seems to us to owe its strength and its weakness to the fact that it lacks alike the injustice and the momentum of reaction. It is a body sensitive rather to attraction than repulsion, and hence characterised by the looseness of texture which is inseparable from the readiness constantly to assimilate new material. Religion, modified by Science—words which sum up its ideal as little inaccurately as any short descrip-



tion—cannot possibly be an aggressive or a missionary creed. But Kingsley, though in some respects the typical man of his party, was unlike his party in this respect. In many ways nature seems to us to have intended him for a soldier, and this part of his character was strongly engaged in all his preaching. And it is evident that in his youth the foe which impressed his imagination and kindled his energy was that party which is associated with the Oxford of the third and fourth decades of our century, and the great exponent of which became subsequently, by a strange and yet natural fatality, Kingsley's most illustrious antagonist. The spirit in him which rebelled against the teaching of the Oxford School was that which we have already tried to describe in speaking of the Christian Socialist movement, the feeling he mistook for Democracy. The High Churchman, so far as he was consistent, said, 'The Church is the Ark, in which we are called on to take refuge from the waves of a troublesome world. God's appointed channel of Redemption cannot have a mere *preferential* advantage over any alternative; if it is what we deem it, it must be the exclusive path to all that we mean by Salvation. To make the world only a lower stage for the exhibition of the same kind of providence that we find in this sacred enclosure is to take away the very object of the enclosure.' Kingsley could never have listened with sufficient patience to this kind of argument to be able to answer, or even to understand it. But the antagonistic truth to which he held fast was that sense of the value of all that we gather up in the word *Nature*, which was the spring of so much of his power. He had not a logical mind, and he never troubled himself about the relation of one truth to another. If he had tried to set forth his view of the relation between that influence which the High Churchman thought the only Divine one to that broader influence which he himself traced to the same source, he might, we believe, have accurately expressed his meaning by an illustration that is none the worse for its triteness. The natural Order would stand to the Supernatural as the law of gravitation to that of chemical affinity, and the High-

Church party take the place of a chemist who should declaim against the absurdity of supposing that all matter was mutually attractive, whereas he could show you a thousand experiments to prove that this attractive influence was of the most rigidly selective character. He saw that there was no more absurdity in saying that an influence may be from one point of view impartial, and from another selective in the inward world, than there is in the outward world, where we are obliged to say it. And he guarded with a certain noble jealousy men's belief in what we will venture to call the impartial influence of God,—those influences which come to all alike, whether they believe in God or not. He stood within an inner circle, he knew the better thing, and he was indignant that those who knew it also should try to exalt their position at the expense of those who were without. This was what he meant by calling them an aristocratic party, and in this sense it is perfectly true. His protest in favour of the holiness of all natural impulse and law seems to us to have been stronger than was necessary, and to have betrayed some ignorance of the true dangers of the age; but if the Oxford of 1834 had been the world, our only criticism would have been the wish that the protest should be made by one of a different temperament from Kingsley's.

How far the protest was necessary as things were, we will not inquire. The importance of the first High-Church movement—very different in character from that which represents it in our day—is, perhaps, nowadays underestimated; on the other hand, it seems to us to have been exaggerated by Kingsley. We are somewhat surprised at the space it filled in his mind; judging from his own account of his education, we should have formed a different anticipation as to his object of recoil. Probably the true explanation is that applicable to so many cases of alienation,—an extinct sympathy. There are some letters (i. 249-60) to a friend who had begged him to disentangle a lady apparently unknown to him, from some strong Romanising influence, which from a biographical view are full of the deepest interest, and from them we learn that



the temptations of the ascetic life had at some time presented themselves with real force to him. 'For several years,' he says (i. 258), 'it was the question which I felt I must either conquer, or turn priest or monk. . . . I, too, have held, one by one, every doctrine of the extreme High-Church party, and faced their consequences.' If it was so, we can only say it is another instance of the wisdom of that profound saying of Lessing's, which we have had occasion to quote before, that superstition does not lose its influence when we cease to believe in it. For our own part, were we called upon to choose between the dangers of preaching marriage as Kingsley did, or celibacy as his Romanising opponent seems to have done, we should care very little which way the matter were settled. It is better to make a neutral thing a duty than a crime, no doubt, but there is just the same kind of evil in both mistakes. Kingsley seems to have come very near seeing this in one letter (i. 188), but his logic was always elastic enough to save him from any inconvenient inference, and his indifference as to the bearing of physical science on this question is one of the many proofs that this influence did not go very deep with him. He never seems to have looked at the question from any other point of view than that of indignant protest against the advocacy of celibacy by the Romanising party in the Church. But it is the explanation of much that seems to us extravagant in his attitude to this party, that he was repelled from it by that secret sense of resemblance which makes a humble nature unjust. Of course, from a superficial point of view, and also in the depth of their being, Kingsley and the High Churchman of his youth were as unlike as two religious men could be. On the surface, he had a strong distaste for what he called 'the fastidious, maundering, die-away effeminacy' of this party, and in all fundamentals their views were the opposite of his. But there was a wide middle region where their tastes, perhaps in some degree even their opinions, were also his, and we think this was the region where he knew himself to be weak. In calling them an *aristocratic* party, he did not of course mean to assert anything about the social stratum in which



they sought to move. He meant that they preached a gospel for the select, and set up an ideal for those who desired to live apart from the world. He had nothing of this kind of aristocracy, but all that is fine and all that is weak of what we gather up in that word was in him. He never forgot, we think, that he was what he describes himself,—‘a gentleman of ancient family,’ remembering it generally in the sense that *noblesse oblige*, but remembering it in every sense. He was repelled by anything eccentric or bizarre as by a discord, and the conventions of good-breeding, we suspect, were rated by him at the outside of their value. Nor was his religion free from a certain trace of this kind of narrowness. He was in fact, though he knew it not, just as much preaching a Gospel to the few as Newman or Pusey. It was not the same type as theirs, but it was almost as exclusive a type, and there were some elements in common. He was brotherly, he was not tolerant; full of broad human sympathy for the atheist, he has nothing but denunciation for the Christian who tried to read the Bible by the light of an honest search for truth, and whose investigations did not supply any fountain of fervour. He had the true chivalric tenderness for the weak, and it is by lonely sickbeds and under poor low cottage roofs that the force of some of his words comes home most forcibly to the reader, but we cannot fancy him at home in the smug villa of respectability. It is very much the High-Church framework filled in with a different pattern.

That reverence for Nature, in all her aspects, of which his hatred to asceticism was one aspect, came out increasingly in the latter half of his life in another form far more useful to his fellows, perhaps not the less useful because it was associated with the like exaggeration, for it had to cope with selfishness and stupidity, which can be only borne down by a momentum hardly possible to moderation. In calling his sanitary zeal exaggerated, we do not suppose that he exaggerated what enlightened efforts to improve the health of the community can do, nor the importance of health itself for the happiness and usefulness of life. But it seems to us that here, as in the

case of marriage, he brought in very doubtful recommendations to reinforce those which are quite strong enough to stand alone. He seems to have thought that to study the laws of health will enable us not only to bring up a healthy generation, but also to take a different view of sickness and all its concomitant misery, when it is actually there. Nothing can be more shallow than such a view, it seems to us. It is utterly impossible to keep separate the evils which man is and is not responsible for, and we should gain nothing if it were possible. There would be no real alleviation of the perplexity of evil, for instance, if we could say pestilence was not the will of God, but earthquakes were. By all means let us do all we can to make this earth a wholesome habitation, and our fellows a vigorous, healthful race. But let us beware how we bind up our faith in God with our faith in any result of these efforts; let us not add to the great burden of physical evil, the grievous pang that pierces the heart which has looked for a pledge of a righteous government that a righteous governor does not will to grant. It may be that when the laws of health are understood and practised sickness will still be known, or that it will be succeeded by physical ills obviously beyond the reach of human power. Kingsley must have read the tremendous denunciation of Nature in the posthumous essays of one of whom we learn with satisfaction that he was his friend. He may have been led by it to doubt, perhaps, how far it was wise to encumber the truths he was certain of with the hypothesis that was there attacked, and as it seems to us, rent triumphantly to shreds.

We had hoped to balance our criticism with citations from these volumes exhibiting the endearing character which makes all censure seem half unjust the moment it is written. Happily the task would be as superfluous as it would be agreeable; the little traits in which is manifested so tender and generous a spirit must be imprinted on thousands of memories, and those to whom Christianity represents the central truth of the world's history, and those to whom it represents an effete and perishing superstition, alike have learned to appreciate

the character of one who, with all his faults, we would venture to point out as a specimen of its power. He was indeed richly endowed by nature. A generous, loving heart, burning with indignation at injustice, melting with pity for suffering, steadfast in loyalty to all bonds of affection and kindred he must have had, whatever his faith. That his fiery spirit never knew the smouldering flame of cherished resentment, that unjust, and, still more, half-just attack woke nothing bitter and rancorous within him; that the wide circumference of his care was never chilled by the perfect satisfaction and repose he found at its focus,—this, we believe, was the result not of natural temperament, but of an invisible Presence, to whose reality his life was a tribute, no less than his words.



## ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY

THE fate that has brought into the same year of remembrance the names of Thomas Carlyle and of Arthur Stanley has something almost epigrammatic in its sharpness of antithesis. It would be difficult to imagine, I believe it would be impossible to discover, a more striking illustration of the difference of moral colouring which makes the life of one man at times so unintelligible to another. That contrast between the atmosphere of storm or lurid gloom, and then again of mysterious starlight, and the cheerful, explicit, unobtrusive daylight views which are recalled respectively by the two names, is not explicable by any reference to outward circumstances. Arthur Stanley's was a life of untroubled prosperity. But the presence or absence of the poor and incomplete thing we call prosperity does not account for differences such as these. It lies far deeper, in that original constitution of the nature which is rather the cause than the result of anything outward. It is the influence of natural disposition which gives their colouring to the accidents of life; and, so far as the two things can be separated, we know more of a man's fate from his character than of his character from his fate. The life just closed was indeed happy in that complete balance and adjustment of both, the lack of which has shipwrecked many a life of promise, and in following its main incidents we watch the opportunities successively designed, it would seem, to develop every capacity, and set all impulse in connection with the machinery which should work out its happiest result. At his first start in life he was granted the pure and lively satisfaction of erecting an imperishable memorial to one whom he loved

and honoured, and the sense of power which he must then have gained has not been belied by any subsequent effort, though it could, in the nature of things, hardly be again so satisfactorily shown forth. His literary life may be called a long one, if we compare the years of its activity with those of any contemporary; and in that long career, though he has taken his share in controversy, I know not that he has said one word by which any reasonable human being—I might almost say any human being—could feel himself, for one moment, aggrieved or wounded. I cannot say that his works will be the refuge of any heavy-laden spirit. One who is crushed by the awful burdens and perplexities of this life must look elsewhere for any direct help towards escape from them. But even those who know the anguish of doubt must often remember with gratitude the genial influence which beckons them into a region remote from their perplexities, and find in this temporary oblivion, which perhaps a deeper thinker could not have afforded, the best preparation for a hopeful return to these dark problems. We paint an enviable career when we describe one thus gifted. His spirit must have always felt itself at home in its surroundings. The bitterest pains of life must have been unknown to him—estrangement, indignant severance, and remorse were experiences he could hardly have tasted; and even that cup of sorrow, spared to no heart so loving as his, was not deeply drained by him till life was far advanced, and its full bitterness must have been tempered by a sense that ‘the time was short,’ though he knew not how short. And with all these materials of happiness, as well as more outward and vulgar ones which do not quite count for nothing in any life, there was in him none of the hard prosaic outwardness which one is apt to associate with the idea of prosperity. Indeed (if the impression that remains from a very short and slender intercourse may be blended with that derived from other sources), there was something about the slight, shadowy form, the delicate face, and the quaint endearing helplessness associated with it, that cannot be given in any word other than *pathetic*, however

little the external aspect of his life corresponds with such an epithet. And though I do not suppose his was specially a sympathetic nature, there were moments when his reverent wordless compassion soothed the heart as wise utterances perhaps could not have done; and the last words he said to me—‘It is a mistake ever to try to disturb in a mourner that natural feeling, “Look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow”’—appeared to come from a heart that had learnt deeply of the precious lore of sorrow. It is not a lesson that could ever have been taught by a selfish grief. Nor is there any atmosphere, alas! in which selfishness is so soon detected as in that of sorrow. It is not, indeed, very common that affections so firmly anchored as his, should take so wide a range; the happy home did not, with him, shut in the warmth of which it was the focus. No one could say of him, *‘il aimait, comme l’on aime.’* The distractions of an over-full life on the one hand, the separation of half the globe on the other, did not produce that gradual slackening of a once close friendship which a common pursuit and a near neighbourhood sometimes fail to avert; and when the bond which reached round half the world was snapped by death, the sorrow seemed as though his hand was still warm with the last pressure which was a matter of far-off memory. This glow of a loving nature is not felt by those alone who entered into personal relation with him. It is perceptible in every word he ever wrote. To this warmth of heart his writings owe their refreshing, cordial influence; this makes his histories resemble biographies in their vivid personal interest; and to this, in a large degree (of course the interest of its subject also enters largely into the matter), it is owing that his great biography has the second place in popular estimate. A far inferior subject to that which he has set on his sunny canvas would possess an irresistible attraction, painted in hues so warm and yet distinct as those which he has bestowed on the portrait of Dr. Arnold.

Those who felt the genial influence of this sweet nature seem to me to have been affected by it in a way



not very unusual in the moment of loss. They mistake the intensity of an impression for its many-sidedness. There are times when the inadequacy of words comes home to us so forcibly, that we catch up false ones in our dissatisfaction with the true. This irrational tribute to a beloved life should not be nicely scrutinised, but we blur the peculiar charm of a nature when we insist that it had every other. How much of the delightfulness of a strongly idiosyncratic character depends on the little oddities that must be forgotten if we would make it the subject of an absolutely catholic eulogy! I vividly recall the first mention of Arthur Stanley from the lips of one whose description gathered up all characteristic traits, and accentuated them with a certain piquant exaggeration—Lady Salisbury. The little caricature, which cannot, after the lapse of thirty years, be recalled without a smile, gave the impression of a refreshing frankness and brusquerie more accordant with that left by a subsequent meeting, than the eulogies on his dignity and grace, which express doubtless an equally warm appreciation. His special attraction, from a social point of view, was his unique simplicity. We seem forced to commemorate it even in mentioning him. However suitable was his position as Dean of the great Abbey in which he took so lively an interest, it is impossible to speak of him now in any other way, than as Arthur Stanley. At times it seemed as if his position as a Church dignitary took to himself the aspect of a certain masquerade. I remember well the half-comic air with which he said, ‘I should so much have liked to ask the Pope his opinions about himself’ (in recounting an interview with him, if I remember right), and there was something inexpressibly engaging in the playfulness with which he added, ‘I can’t quite fancy thinking myself infallible’; and then came a humorous little pause, as if he was just asking himself whether, after all, that might not be compassed, and he concluded much more decidedly, ‘But certainly I can’t conceive thinking all the Deans of Westminster infallible.’ To speak of simplicity as his great characteristic, is to put into another form what has been happily expressed by

Mr. Llewellyn Davies, in his funeral sermon, as the 'original innocence' of his character. The preacher meant, I presume, to describe in these words that rare degree of blamelessness by which it is converted, in its impression on the mind, from a negative to a positive fact. It is something much more rare than it sounds. 'A blameless life' seems a poor thing, partly because we use the word so loosely; every one is so apt to be accredited with it who has done no flagrant wrong. But absolute purity has the same beauty in the spiritual as in the material world. A rock pool would lose half its beauty with the crystal brine which encloses its spreading fronds and opening tentacles, even if they could remain unchanged by the subtraction of their environment; and in the same manner all the positive qualities of a nature, absolutely free from vanity or worldliness, have a certain peculiar beauty which they owe to the transparency of their medium. Arthur Stanley joined the simplicity of a child of five years old to the cultivation of a grey-haired man and the goodness of a pure woman. It is a pity—though it is a very natural temptation—to spoil the uniqueness of impression thus produced by insisting that he had also qualities which, in the mysterious correlation of our moral growth, and the imperfection of our being, at its present stage, are not altogether consistent with those which were so eminently exhibited in him.

But it is time to turn from his social aspect to the position which he held before the eye of the public. And it is impossible to regard him from this point of view without considering the attitude and the character of that section of the Church which, in my view, was most completely represented by him. We shall, in my opinion, give most distinctness to the body which is called the Broad Church, if we connect it with Stanley's imperishable contribution to our literature, and consider its dawn as announced by the object of his biography, and its twilight closed by the biographer. Dr. Arnold seems to me to have been the first Broad Churchman, and Dr. Stanley the last. It may be disputed that he closes the series perhaps, but I can hardly imagine two opinions as to the fact that he formed its most typical member.



And yet it is not from this point of view, possibly, that his friends will regard him most readily. A strong and intelligible objection to speaking of the Broad Church as a party is felt by many persons. They see that, while all such party names are more or less misleading, there does exist in the other two parties of the Church a bond of cohesion which in this residuary legatee of opposite convictions is entirely wanting. The sacramental system is a great idea, true or false, and so is the direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the human soul. But what can we say that the Broad Churchman believes, as the High Churchman believes in the virtue of the Sacraments, as the Low Churchman believes in the importance of Conversion? Nothing, if we take a strictly logical point of view, but what every Christian believes, and I may now almost say, every Theist. And, of course, if conviction is so vague, and only negation definite, the bond must consist in a common disbelief—a bond that does not bind. Of all parties we feel in some degree, and of this party we feel in a very great degree, that when we speak of the men who compose them as forming one body, we are under the influence of that same law of perspective which may from a distant hill unite into an apparently single edifice the churches of two or three scattered villages, separated by many a weary mile. Under the ranks of the Broad Church have been reckoned men who would feel themselves separated by more mutual divergence than that between them and many members of the other two Church parties. Hardly any man is further separated from another than he who has rejected less of any traditional system from him who has rejected more of it; for it is not so difficult to be just to a foe as to an ally who seems to compromise the cause. And then, again, if we quit a narrowly logical point of view, and group men by the moral colouring of their convictions, the Broad Church may still seem an inappropriate name for the men we speak of. If, on the one hand, it ascribes fictitious unity to a scattered body of thinkers, on the other (it may be urged), it appears as a fallacious concession to an insignificant party in the Church of a name due to the Church of England itself. A Church stamped by a peculiar reverence for the past, yet



originating with a Reformation, is necessarily a broad Church, and those who might be chosen as its best representatives seem to me also to set forth very forcibly the spirit I aim at describing. Bishop Butler, if he were not too strong an individuality to be ranged under any division of Church parties, might well be regarded as the greatest of Broad Churchmen; and his great work contains in germ all that tendency to find the same law in things earthly and heavenly which gives the Broad Church their power. In some sense, indeed, the Broad Church is older than the Anglican Church; it had its representative in the Reformation; and the antagonism which Erasmus excited in Luther appears to me a striking illustration of what I have said of the recoil with which a leader abjures the alliance of one who, seen from afar, would appear to belong to the same group, and who was actually fighting under the same banner. The Church of England would have been a peculiarly appropriate home for such a mind as Erasmus; and the reader will remember how another scholar of the Renaissance—Casaubon—as he is presented to us in Mr. Pattison's masterly portrait, finds himself for the first time at home in its neighbourhood, for much the same reason, indeed, that Stanley (though he was not a great scholar) found himself at home in its bosom. If such men as Erasmus were Broad Churchmen, it may be thought that the name is too wide for a party in the Church of our day. If any interpretation less catholic, less positive, than one which would include them, is put upon it, we should have to concede that it would be too narrow to mark out that body which found its typical instance in Arthur Stanley.

We answer such objections as these in taking up that historical point of view which was characteristic of the man I am endeavouring to commemorate. As a matter of fact, there existed in the Church of our day a body of men who were rather Christians than Churchmen, but who did also prize the bond of the Church, and who protested against the narrowing influences which High and Low Churchmen alike would impose on its scope; and there was a definite moral tone about them, which comes

out clearly when we compare them with their predecessors, or their successors. They were all concerned, more or less, to vindicate the sacredness of things secular, to reclaim 'the world' from the shadow of Godlessness, to break down the barrier that both the other parties in the Church set up around a particular part of life, and spread the sacred influences they would confine within its limits over the whole. The spirit which their teaching embodied had always existed in the Church of England, as a strong tendency. And then, again, in our own day, this spirit is present in some sense—that is, the thing it asserts is denied by no one who makes any pretension to the character of a thinker. But any assertion whatever is a totally different thing according as it is or is not a protest. Words lose their meaning when they express what nobody denies. It is not necessarily that everybody then believes what before only a few people believed. It is, in this case at all events, that the meaning of a protest departs with the belief that called it forth. The men I think of reclaimed the whole of life for an influence that was already accepted as ruling a part of life; they never addressed themselves to the question whether the belief in its existence might not be a delusion. When the great question of the day is, what proof is there that this influence exists at all?—when even those who believe in it most firmly cannot take it for granted in those whom they address, their meaning is gone. The Evangelical, looking for an especial operation of the Holy Spirit, disentangled from all outward influences, was tempted to ignore or disbelieve that influence which is common. The High Churchman declaring an outward channel of God's grace, equally marked off from all natural opportunities of attaining it, and especially insisting on the dangers of all those natural instincts and impulses which it did not directly evolve, was tempted to look down on secular life in much the same spirit, though in a different manner. And so far as the men here contemplated have taught that the influence which the High Church party find in the Sacraments, which the Low Church party find in the power that turns men from evil to God, covers the



whole of life, so far they have been the bringers of a new Gospel to their countrymen. He who has made another human being feel 'the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not,' has surely fulfilled the mission of an Evangelist. But all his power depends on the previous conception of the reality of that which he desires to extend. 'There is no insurmountable barrier between the sacred and the secular,' may mean either 'everything is divine,' or 'nothing is divine.' They would have said (those who embodied what I think was the characteristic truth of their party)—'A part of life has been stamped with an especial sanctity, to bear witness that the whole is sacred. One history is avowedly the record of God's dealings with mankind, to show us that in a true sense all history is so. One day is set apart for God's service, in a special sense, to remind us that all days are to be so devoted in a broader sense. One man is announced as *the* Son of God to make us remember that every man is *a* son of God.' This is no mere negative truth; it is as large an addition to positive belief as the spirit of man can receive.

But it must not be forgotten that, seen from without, this message takes a very different aspect. Those who declare, 'Such and such an influence is not *exclusively* there,' will always seem to those who do not agree with them, to deny that it is there at all. There is a deeply rooted instinct in our nature, recorded in all history, by which we are constantly apt to confuse reality and limitation. If the Spirit of God is not shut in by obvious and unquestionable barriers, it will seem to many that the only proof of its operation is taken away from us. To declare that it is everywhere will seem much the same as to deny that it is anywhere. This truth, indeed, is brought home to us in a hundred homely instances: the saying, 'what is everybody's business is nobody's business,' records the conviction in its least questionable shape; and when we are reminded that such an association belongs to the imperfection of humanity, and can have no reference to an *infinite* power, we are still unable to forget the force of all human analogies, and the degree in



which it has pleased God to mould our experience of His dealings with us on those of our fellow-men. When these facts are borne in mind, it will not be difficult to understand how the Broad Church, obvious and unquestionable as are many of their utterances, still took to the outer world the aspect of heretics, both for attraction and repulsion. Those who denied the limitation of Divine grace would obviously appear, to a large body of believers, to deny its existence.

This suspicion of heresy which marked off the different members of the party of whom I consider Arthur Stanley a typical example, was not wholly escaped by himself. In what light it is to be regarded depends on the reader's point of view. There is a striking passage in one part of Mr. Froude's *History* in which he contrasts the historic and the contemporary view of heresy—to the one side the baleful weed whose extirpation is the first demand of the husbandman, and whose presence therefore is the signal for vigilant destruction; to the other, the welcome blade, bringing promise of the rich harvest. We could hardly carry on the contrast in our own day. The view with which we regard the heresies of our forefathers, we may say broadly, is the view with which we regard our own. Heresy has become an attraction, a promise, a savour of originality, an attestation of thought. Still we must not forget the great limitations under which this is true. It is truer to-day than it was yesterday: it will be yet more exclusively true to-morrow; but in looking back ever so little we must not forget the opposite truth, if we would be just to the men we speak of, and appreciate a courage the occasion for which has so rapidly died away. I know of nothing in Stanley's life—of very little in any life—that impresses me with so much admiration as his speech in defence of Colenso, made in Convocation. One would imagine Dean Stanley had as little sympathy with Dr. Colenso as with any man that ever lived. They had treated the same subject-matter from totally opposite points of view, and nothing in a general way is so separating. Yet he stood up and told his reverend brethren that they were attacking 'in the

unfriended and the absent' opinions which they dared not attack in 'the well-friended and the present'; he reminded them that all the offence which they found in the work of an obscure, friendless man, the common object of attack to theologians, dilettanti, and littérateurs, was present in the popular History given to the world by a prosperous, successful Church dignitary, the courted member of Society, the man of family and the friend of princes. We can hardly fancy such an allusion from one who was not absolutely free from every taint of vanity or worldliness. And though to an absolutely simple nature it is comparatively easy to speak the truth about self as about everything else, still it seems to me that as much chivalry as simplicity was needed to throw the defence of an absent heretic into the form which it took here. I cite the speech, however, not only for its proof of these qualities, though it is these which give it interest, but as illustrating what I have said as to the flavour of heresy. When Stanley told the members of Convocation that they could not and they dared not attack him for the views of Jewish history for which they wished to turn Colenso out of the Church, he marked an important stage in the history of the Church. Heresy might still be persecuted in the obscure and unbefriended, but the very same views held by a man of social position, bade defiance to all attack. But while as an offence it could not be noted, as an attraction it was still potent. It still remained a bond between those whom it characterised. It still gave a certain interest to their works over and above the intrinsic merit there contained, so that they have a certain common colouring, and seen from afar fall into a common group. Is it judging hastily to say it is so no longer? I do not mean to imply that the majority of the clergy look with less disfavour on heterodoxy than they did, or that their interpretation of the Church formularies would be much changed from what it was. But that general support which gives orthodoxy its meaning has changed its object. It has gone over from the world of theology to the world of physical science. In this region the importance of



'right opinion' is felt so strongly, that it is not felt very strongly anywhere else. And in the domain of the Church, therefore, heresy has become a merely internal question. Arthur Stanley's life, among its many other points of interest, has that of being the last which belonged to the old state of things. There are thoughtful liberals in the Church of England, as there are elsewhere, but they no longer form a party. And there are also bold and speculative intellects, who can subject the sacred documents of their Church to a critical analysis, and come to conclusions which their predecessors would have thought startling, while they yet remain within its fold; and it is impossible to say that its formularies exclude them, for they were not framed with a view to any such questions as they have mooted. But whether they be thought right, or whether they be thought wrong; whether their position in the Church be thought honest or dishonest; whether they be felt liberators or robbers, no one, we think, will feel that there is any longer a question of their being heretics. They may be attacked in religious newspapers, and it may be felt by every one that their position as religious teachers is unnatural, but the associations belonging to heterodoxy attach to them no longer.

All the characteristics touched on as belonging to the set of men of whom Stanley is here regarded as the latest, might be found in him, by friend or foe. What has been said of its merely negative character might be urged, in a hostile spirit, against a very small part of his utterances, and its strength is visible in all that is most characteristic of him. His was a truly Catholic spirit. And perhaps there is nothing which, in our day, may more fitly be described as 'the last infirmity of noble minds'—a description which wonderfully changes its meaning from age to age—than that distortion of the Catholic spirit, which refuses to recognise the watershed of good and evil. If we are never to recognise in a human being the soldier of a different banner from that which claims our loyalty, Christianity loses its meaning. It is impossible to say there is *nothing* of the spirit which forbids this recognition in him; but I do not think any



one who had so much of the real tolerance ever had so little of the false. An enemy might doubtless discover passages from his lips or his pen which seemed to fit themselves to a vague, colourless dilution of that reality for which men have died. But these passages are characteristic of him only so far as they show that even the longing for peace which fills the loving heart, even the aspiration after catholicity which sways the active intellect, may at times lead astray. Memories of the look with which he broke the bread and poured the wine for those who were to partake of that feast no more till they tasted of it in the Father's kingdom—of the tones in which, beside the open grave, he committed to its embrace the mortal relics of that spirit which his upward gaze seemed to follow—forbid the thought that his inmost being expressed itself in any utterance which abjured the strait gate and narrow way, or surrendered the world of the unseen to the jurisdiction of mere opinion, according to that fashion of the day which a few of his words might seem to favour. Indeed, I believe it was his very remoteness from such a school which made it possible that he should seem for a moment to sympathise with them. His faith was like the filial trust of the child on its mother's knee, which knows not the meaning of doubt. All his writings are suffused by the colouring of this silent, peaceful trust, though no word from his pen is aimed at inspiring it—it seems always taken for granted, like the clear daylight, which is given not to see but to see by. But the faith thus unquestionably present, however deep, was not definite; and the judgment which should assign Arthur Stanley's influence to the merely negative school of our day has some plausibility, though it is unjust.

On its strong side, on the other hand, he embodies it as fully as any man that ever lived. No one ever more consistently turned to the search for whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely, through their various disguises. The sentence which most gathers up all that is at once elevating and expansive in his writing is the assertion (in his volume on

the Eastern Church) that the Father's house, as it has many mansions, so it has many entrances. The words seem to me an expansion of the text they cite especially characteristic of, and yet from another point of view especially needed by our generation. It was only very rarely that Stanley ever fell into that distortion of wise hopefulness which confuses variety of access with indefiniteness of enclosure. Wherever he found warm human sympathy, wherever was to be discovered any appreciation of human character, there he saw a portal to the Father's house. And even where there was nothing that could be so definitely claimed as a promise of the higher life as this, there was something very beautiful in the way he always contrived to discover excellence in the most unpopular or distasteful of expression or achievement. A trifling reminiscence has always dwelt with me as exhibiting this quality with wonderful sweetness and grace. He had been speaking of the French sculptor who illustrated his lecture by pointing out a great number of anatomical faults in some celebrated equestrian statue, all of which were avoided in a horse carved by himself, and then, under the influence of irresistible admiration, was forced to conclude, '*Et cependant cette mauvaise bête vit, et la mienne est morte.*' Shortly afterwards, the conversation turned upon the work of Renan, whose *St. Paul* was then a new work. Nothing touching any characteristic view of Renan's could have been otherwise than extremely repugnant to those in whose hearing the little dialogue took place; and it was not without a certain anxiety that I heard him single out for praise Renan's ingenious personal sketch of the Apostle. 'It is wonderful,' he said, 'how much he has collected, from different parts of the Epistles, which bears on his personal history. It was not new to me; he has mentioned nothing that had not caught my attention; but when I compare my sketch' (in his volume on the Corinthians, I suppose) 'with his, I always feel "*cette mauvaise bête vit, et la mienne est morte.*"' I know not how far the impression the speech made upon me was shared by others; but something in this singling out one



whose name was then a signal for expressions of disgust or contempt among almost all those whose opinion Stanley valued, as affording an instance of superiority to himself, has always remained as a very touching expression of the qualities which those who knew him well, doubtless saw exhibited in much more striking and memorable instances.

A catholic spirit is always an historical spirit, and a large part of Stanley's value to his time lay in his strong historic interests. The Church of England would always offer a congenial home to the mind that seeks to preserve continuity of an historic progress, to keep links with the past unbroken, and reduce any protest against its drift to a minimum. And those minds who agree in this desire, if they differ in all beside, are not at one in an insignificant matter, or one that has no bearing on the spiritual life. For history is in an important sense the revelation of the will of God, and though I think this sense has been sometimes misunderstood, yet assuredly we shall lose a large part of the teaching which this world furnishes as to His purpose if we suppose that the events of national life throw no light on our appointed discipline as His children, however much this may be obscured by strange clouds, under the shadow of which we must confess that we can discern nothing. And Stanley's historic feeling, which was one great root of his interest in a Church which embodies so much reverence for the past as the Church of England does, was also, in some degree, a link with that party among us which scorns all Churches.

It is extremely interesting to trace this connection with what is called the philosophy of his time; and it does not appear to me quite an obvious one. We are accustomed every day to see it assumed that when the genesis of any belief has been unfolded, the belief itself is refuted; necessary truth, for instance, is explained away, when we are told that it means *inherited* truth. Stanley would have no sympathy whatever with that view; perhaps he could hardly have understood it. But he did himself give it practically a certain adhesion in his intense interest in that part of Christian life which belonged to the historic



expression of spiritual truth. He could write of Christian institutions, we are told, and yet absolutely ignore those great transcendent facts which Christian institutions imply and symbolically express. The fact was that his interest in their outward development took the place of any penetrating inquiry into their inner meaning. He embodied that interest in development, which is the great characteristic fact of our day, as it concerns itself with the life of the Church. He took his stand on that point of view whence that life is seen unfolding itself in successive events; and its animating spirit, as independent of all manifestations of time, was to him no object of intellectual contemplation.

It cannot be denied that his view of history was in some sense an external one. There is something outward in a perfectly healthy nature.

‘By no disturbance in his soul,  
Or strong compunction in him wrought’

forced to look within, his interest dwelt most readily on the unfolding of the rich and many-coloured pageant of national life, and on the outward world as the scene of that pageant. So far as the words suggest anything shallow, anything rootless, they would be most misleading. In an unfavourable sense, nothing could be more inapplicable to him than the epithet external, for he was the simplest and most unworldly of men. But he was external, in the sense that he dwelt in the world of event, of ‘pleasant pictures,’ of moving life and incident. Perhaps no kind of character is so much opposed to the theological spirit as this. For no two minds are so much separated as those who are forced to use the same words with a totally different meaning. What the theologian means by truth, is apt to conceal from him that what the historian means by truth is a reality; and though not quite to the same extent, the converse is also true. A man is a good historian in proportion as he learns to look on events with a certain impartiality of interest. I do not mean that the historian must lay aside indignation or admiration; if we did, the very name of Arthur Stanley would prove the most

effective refutation of such a doctrine. But still for the historian the one thing needful is reverence for fact. This and this happened; it had therefore its roots in the past; these are what we have to deal with. Nothing is so difficult as to combine this spirit with any strong theological prepossessions. It is extremely difficult to ascertain what did happen if we begin by strong convictions as to what ought to have happened. No deaf person, it is said, who has any power of hearing words, can learn to decipher the movement of the lips. The apparent aid of one sense makes the other helpless. We would not put the contrast of the theological and historical spirit so absolutely, of course, but something of the same kind is true here. I will again make the rash attempt to convey, through the mere record, an impression in which, as it was made on eye and ear, this contrast of the historic and the theological mind came out in a very definite and characteristic manner, in a little dialogue between two men who might be regarded as the respective embodiment of each—Stanley and Macleod Campbell. Some allusion having been made to Faraday's religion (I think it was), Stanley turned to Campbell for information as to the obscure sect to which he belonged, and it was interesting to observe their different notions of what information about a sect should be. Mr. Campbell set forth at some length, in his slow, careful accents, the *tenets* of the little body of worshippers, a matter in which evidently Stanley felt not much interest. He wanted to be told the date and native place of the heresiarch, to fix him on the map and chronological table—points which, on the other hand, Mr. Campbell thought so little germane to the matter that it was rather difficult to get him to take in that this was what was wanted. Nothing was needed to the incident but a larger scale to make it the typical exhibition of the antagonism between the pure thinker and the historian.

In speaking of Stanley's as the historic mind, we explain the position of the ecclesiastic quite as much as that of the contributor to literature. His strong adhesion to the ideal of an Established Church, it has been well said, is a tribute to his veneration for the secular party to



that alliance. He could not bear the thought of cutting adrift the Church of England from the life of the nation. He could not contemplate the body which bears witness to its spiritual life denuded of some uniform of official life, and deprived of a position on the ground of secular interests. To him Disestablishment took the aspect of a surrender of all that was the source of healthy life; an exchange of a wide, clear outlook, for something narrow and petty; a giving up of the broad judicial views of statesmen for the prejudices of squabbling priests. I recall somewhere in his writings the obvious assertion that the Church of England, if liberated from the control of the State, would immediately fall into at least three parties, and the statement seems regarded by him as an argument against such a separation. Of course, no opinion on the question itself is expressed here, but surely the *heterogeneity* of the Church of England is no argument for its continuance. I cannot help fancying that Stanley thought it was. He was so much impressed by its historic significance, that he was blinded to its spiritual disadvantage. He felt much as the dweller in some ancestral mansion, who protests against the change which would increase its internal convenience at the price of its interest as a record of the past. I do not mean that Stanley looked upon theologic truth as one might look on the convenience of a well-proportioned room. But his mind, prepossessed by the importance of historic truth, was apt, I must repeat, to feel as if that were the only truth. And the protest in favour of this kind of truth, from a Churchman, seems to me so valuable that, for my own part, I am glad it should be exhibited, even in an exaggerated form, if that is to be the only way of making it generally impressive. Woe to the Church where the aspiration after a pure creed discards the guidance and the warning of history! The illusion that such a guidance and warning is in fact a hindrance, resembles that which, as Kant so beautifully says, 'the bird might feel who deemed the atmosphere a hindrance to the flight which it supports, and yearned to spread her wings where no air should oppose their stroke.' If Stanley dwelt too exclusively on this



truth, he did not feel it too strongly. And the Church's need of dwelling on it seems to me measured by the fact that no one now remains to express it from the same point of view.

His historic *interests* are unquestionable. But perhaps there are some who will demur to the description of him as a type of the historic *spirit*. It has been said that, in dealing with the history of the Chosen People, he has somewhat failed in the duty of a historian; that it is not easy from his narrative to make out what he believed to have actually happened. If all history must be critical, the censure is just. When it is said—as it was said at the time his first volume on the Jewish Church appeared, in comparing it with the almost contemporaneous work of Dr. Colenso—that this is the way history ought to be written, then it is a valid rejoinder that this kind of history sets before the reader no definite view of the event as an actual fact, as compared with the event as it became a conception of later ages, and a powerful influence in the experience of those who so regarded it. But surely a history of that which has taken its place as a great picture of national development is history in a very important sense. It would be a very great loss if it were supposed to be the only history; if, as Stanley's unwise eulogists at that time implied, this ideal should be set up as the canon of what every one should propose to himself who deals with the narrative of the events which enshrine the most sacred part of a nation's life. Still, when we have guarded ourselves against this error, we are at liberty to urge that history, written from the point of view of a warm, simple, human sympathy, accepting men's convictions about events as in some sense no less important than events, and bringing by the aid of a lively imagination a picture of this part of the past before his reader's eye, so vivid and human as to remain impressed on their memory—is not superseded by, nor does it supersede the work of, a Niebuhr or a Mommsen, a Milman or a Keim. And this kind of history is not a poor or shallow thing, though no doubt we are driven to somewhat external words when we describe the impression made by it upon the mind.

It is true that in dealing with important events—as, for instance, in the account of the Council of Nice—what Stanley gives is a lively succession of images, a vivid rememberable account of an interesting event, together with the sense that it was an event of first-rate importance, rather than any contribution to the knowledge of the issues it involved. I must again repeat, he deals with the aspects of life. But is it not a gain to be prepared for ecclesiastical history by vivid pictures of its aspects? Is it a small benefit to be made to believe in their reality? The critical historian would lose his best ally in the vivid, sympathetic narrator, who forces us to realise that the transactions he analyses were real. With such a loss all history would be deprived of its illustrations.

The same kind of criticism which finds Stanley's histories unhistorical, is led to question the value of what may be considered as his main contribution to English Literature. His *Life of Arnold*, it has been hinted, is no contribution towards any understanding of the actual literal past. He has given the world such a portrait of his master as Vandyke gave of Charles I. If it be thereby understood that some part of the charm of that biography is due to the spirit of the biographer, a wise admirer of Stanley will rather demand the meaning of the concession than refuse to make it. Whence came the impression of Stanley's master which Stanley has transferred to his many readers? If it was no record of experience, of what was it the result? Assuredly not of any such courtly feeling as might transmit flattery of a king of England to a world of spectators. Dr. Arnold impressed one of his pupils in a manner that has transmitted itself in a biography that Englishmen, we believe, will never cease to peruse; and those who refuse to regard it as a record of the truth only accept the onus of some other explanation of an ideal that is certainly vivid, individual, and consistent. I would not dispute the contention that a very different picture of its object might be painted with equal claim on the reader's attention. Nay, I would concede that the interest of the biography might have been increased if it had contained more record of the struggle



and the defeat that (unless this life was unlike all other lives) must have formed a considerable portion of its experience. But I would ask again, if the vivid transmission of a moral impression is not a contribution to history? The aspect of a life on the minds of those it has kindled with a generous flame is no small part of its biography. Another picture may have been possible from the point of view of a critic. But it would not stamp with falsehood that picture which has no origin but the shape of real life on the one hand, or the colouring of an admiration created by experience on the other. How large a scope Stanley was himself inclined to allow to a variety of view respecting his master was attested by a remark he once made about the very different portrait (so at least it has been called) given to the world by Mr. Hughes. About the time when 'Tom Brown' had revived many recollections of Rugby life, and there was some question as to the truth of a representation which seemed to trace the so-called school of 'muscular Christianity' to the influence of Dr. Arnold, he was asked if he did not think it strange that both Arnold's spiritual progeny, as the muscular Christians were then considered, and his son according to the flesh, should stand in so little obvious relation with his own teaching. (A remark, by the bye, which I give simply as drawing forth his reply, for it now seems to me not a sensible one.) As for Matthew Arnold's doctrine, Stanley fully agreed with the speaker—much more, I think, than the truth warranted. But as to 'Tom Brown' and the muscular Christians, he expressed an emphatic dissent from the implied opinion that the view there given of Dr. Arnold's influence was at variance with his own. 'I have done my best to give a good picture of Arnold,' he said. 'I do not know that I could make it any better. But this I would say, if any one feels he must choose between my picture and Mr. Hughes's, then I would say without hesitation, let him take "Tom Brown."' The remark was interesting for many reasons, but not least as a concession that his own picture of Arnold must have been consciously a part of the truth. But what a tribute we have to the faithfulness



of what is given, when its incompleteness is, by its own author, discerned so clearly! Perhaps there was an incompleteness which he could not so well discern; it may be that the picture would have been more accurate had there been a background of storm, which the sunny nature of the painter disqualified him from supplying. But it cannot be said that a portrait is untrue because it bears witness to the limitations of the painter. The gain of distinctness, probably, is more than the loss of completeness.

The party which took its rise with Arnold is, in our own day, lost in its own predominance. We have all felt, probably, at some time of our lives, the strange and subtle change by which some difference of *degree* has suddenly become difference of *kind*. A relation, we have felt, has been long changing, we knew not whither it was tending. Day by day some mysterious influence seems at work, perplexing and entangling the bonds which bind our soul to another. At last we wake up suddenly to the discovery that those bonds are loosed. We find ourselves suddenly two, and looking back we see that in fact it has long been so, though we perceived it not. So is it, I think, with the spirit of free inquiry within the Church. The pressure from without is gone which gave it cohesion. It exists in individuals, but there is no longer any bond between them. If this view be true, Stanley, who was happy in so much beside, was not less happy 'in the opportunity of his death.' Had he lived to old age he must have survived that influence of which we have chosen him as the representative. He had not much to say—we think none of his school had—to a world which finds its intellectual keynote in the study of Physical Science. His mind was altogether humane and historic, and when the primacy of study went over, as in our day it has done, from the study of men to the study of things, his influence lost its proper field. While it lasted it was always pure, elevating, and soothing, and few men could turn a backward glance on a finished life and find less to regret or condemn. The summons (we have heard) was not altogether welcome to him; the few recorded utterances of his death-bed imply

a wish, slight but real, to return to life. But the declaration, at a time when death was very near, 'I am satisfied,' might seem (if it be possible to dwell on death-bed utterances without exaggeration) a foretaste of that review which was so soon to be granted him from a higher station. It was not this poor life which satisfied him. It was the hope, larger than all his happy memories, the common possession of which reduces to insignificance the interval between a life of defeat and failure, and one so blest as his.

## THE CAMBRIDGE APOSTLES OF 1830

THE saying of Schiller, 'By what he omits show me the master of style,' is not only a canon of art: it is the clue by which we may interpret a large part of life. If the finished picture, rich in every resource of art, does not delight the eye as the hasty sketch; if he who leaves nothing unsaid, even though he say it all well and wisely, can never satisfy the reader as one who takes him into partnership and calls upon him to carry out hints scattered by the way; we may say also that the faculties and instincts of our nature, exercised on these fields of literature and of art, find scope in a larger sphere. The charm which is felt in a few rapid touches from the hand of the master, in a pregnant half-sentence from a great poet, is present in many fragments of actual life; it mingles with the emotions roused by early death, explaining the strange mixture of compassion and envy with which we regard a career checked in its brilliant dawn, and recall those *pueri innuptæque puellæ Impositique rogis juvenes ante ora parentum*, whom the poet seems to name with a tender smile. It makes itself felt even through the disappointment, when years have mellowed it, with which we look back on the fallacious aspirations of our own youth. We were to do so much, we have done nothing—sad thought! yet strangely softened, as we look back, by a sense of the deep reality in those unrealised dreams. 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter'; the fullest achievement cannot either represent or obliterate those youthful visions which remain as an actual part of the experience of life, and a guide-post to the deeper meaning of the whole.

We have been led to these reflections by reading the



letters and memorials of Archbishop Trench, and lingering over the glimpses which the volume affords of a cluster of men (all now passed away except the Laureate) whose common interests represent a state of mind just at that point of nearness to and distance from our own, which is most inviting to the student of thought. They were among us but yesterday—so at least it seems to those who find any fragment of memory revived by these memorials—and yet a new world has come upon us since their time, and when we turn back to these records of their youth, we feel that we have reverted to another epoch of thought. The group breaks up, or at least is lost to our vision as a group, a little before the beginning of the present reign. Its aspirations were those of ardent youth, in the midst of political hopes that took shape with the French Revolution of 1830, and of spiritual yearnings akin to a movement with which no person mentioned here had any sympathy, yet the neighbourhood of which we feel in all that is most interesting in the book—the movement centred in John Henry Newman. It was a time of stirring hope and awakening thought. The long repression born of the dread of revolutionary violence was passing away, the conservative reaction was no longer a crushing thing; it was spiritualised and softened, it took an attitude of compromise. The forces of '48 were already at work, but they were ready for alliance with all that was orderly and constitutional; reverence for the past was everywhere ready to unite itself with hope for the future, and the spirit of defiance seemed extinct. The volumes which present us with this glimpse of the past lead us also away from it; and in quitting the epoch at which Richard Trench was one of a brotherhood and passing on to that in which he became an important individual, we leave behind us what to our mind constitutes their special attraction. In following the course of an important and active life we necessarily pass through a variety of atmospheres and cannot dwell on the record of a single phase of thought. Yet one is sometimes tempted to ask—Why must all biography be linear? Why cannot a memoir choose its subject at his most characteristic point, and

branching out to the right and the left, give the thought-life of a time, rather than the history of a life? It is a happy accident of these memorials that this is the impression left on their reader's mind by them; and it is this which we would here transfer. The aged Archbishop shall, for us, share with the youth who barely reached manhood, yet whose name is known to all, that morning gleam in which the group stands before us. Richard Trench had many claims to our remembrance, but we will remember him here only as one of the Cambridge Apostles at a time when few surviving now were grown men—as the friend of Arthur Hallam and John Sterling, and of others who shared their aspirations and hopes, but have left no shadow on the canvas of genius. He and they shall help to set before us the ideal of a time that, near as it is to ours, yet from our present outlook on the world of thought seems to belong to a vanished world.

The name by which they are known, already familiar to the readers of the lately published biography of Frederick Maurice, would have been familiar to all readers if a slip of the most brilliant pen which has ever commemorated any one of the Apostles had not substituted for it the less individual title of *The Union*. As the very point of the name seems to have been its apparent infelicity (for the Apostles, so far as we can see, were Apostles of nobody), this little blunder on the part of a writer with so fine a taste for irony as Carlyle is somewhat curious. Perhaps it is significant. Carlyle, though he has kept the name of one of the Apostles green, had we think, but little sympathy with their spirit. We must go for a true representative of that spirit to one who may, in some respects, be regarded as his antitype. 'The effect which Maurice has produced at Cambridge,' writes one of their number, Arthur Hallam, in 1830, 'by the single creation of that society of the Apostles, is far greater than I can dare to calculate, and will be felt, both directly and indirectly, in the age that is upon us.' He whose influence, exaggerated perhaps in this particular instance, was foretold with the sudden clearness of vision belonging to one beckoned away from this world, was regarded, during a



considerable portion of his career, as a heretic, and felt the opprobrium with somewhat exaggerated emphasis long after it was, in the eyes of most of his neighbours, exchanged for a halo. Any one who now thinks as he did, if such a one is to be found, must be sought in the ranks of the ultra orthodox. The change measures our distance from that elder world; most persons with whom it is natural to compare him would now probably shrink from the imputation of orthodoxy as he shrank from its opposite. It seems to denote something incompatible with that openness to new truth which our age demands as its ultimate merit. We must recross the chasm thus opened if we would understand him or any of his spiritual kindred. The change by which Doubt has been translated into terms of knowledge, and elevated, as Agnosticism, into the position of the creed of Science, has moved us far away from the Apostles. We measure the distance best where it is shortest. When one of their number, remembering another, wrote—

‘There lies more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds’—

he looks towards the new spirit, but stands back from it. The sense would not, any more than the rhythm, bear our substitute for doubt. Agnosticism is doubt emptied of Faith, and turning its face towards Denial. The change of attitude between the Sceptic and the Agnostic marks the transition from the first to the last half of our century—from an age which accepted the Supernatural as part of its mental surroundings, to one which is absorbed in the miracles of Science, and looks askance at every other miracle.

Frederick Maurice embodied these aspirations after the unseen which characterised the whole group and the time in which it appeared; but he may be taken as their type, because he was not enclosed within their limits. We see in all these men some yearning after a spiritual atmosphere which was the air he breathed. ‘So long as institutions can be maintained to tell the world there is something invisible and permanent of which it can take no account,’



he writes on October 1, 1832, 'I would desire to be among the number of those who strive, each with what powers are given him, for their preservation.' Those words strike the keynote of this phase of thought. We hear it again and again in the deeper utterances of Tennyson, hear it the more effectively because it is not the direct aim of the poet to bring it home to us. It gathers up all that is of most interest in that short life of John Sterling, less made known to us by his two biographies, than pointed at as something which men ardently desired to make known; it is felt in the poems of Monckton Milnes, it seems to us suggested in most of the letters from the forgotten members of the group contained in this volume. Doubtless, the yearning after the Invisible, and the conviction that the world can take no account of it, is a characteristic of many minds in all ages. But it is not, in our day, the conviction of any group, except those which have no other bond of union.

It is but another aspect of this common characteristic of the Apostles to mark the poetic tastes and aspirations of which we may take the high-water mark in the Laureate as we take the high-water mark of the other set of feelings in Frederick Maurice. Almost all of them have left something that we must recognise as poetry. Charles Tennyson, we see here, was regarded as almost an equal of his brother—Arthur Hallam wrote one sonnet which seems to us to show that he might have taken a place among those who find words for the music of Nature—Lord Houghton's verses express more perfectly than any others we can call to mind the feelings of a refined social life, the thoughts, fancies, and desires of cultivated men who live in towns, and who have leisure to brood over their own feelings; while Trench takes the same place among men whose interest is in religion. Of John Sterling one work remains—his *Strafford*—which seems to us to show real poetic power, and a large proportion of the small leisure which the invasions of ill-health left to him was occupied with attempts which had the same aim. In the writings of all these men there is just that touch of vivifying power which transforms some fragment of experience,

some picture from Nature, some thought of the inward life, from a passive to an active thing, giving it coherence, unity, distinctness; bringing home to the apprehension of an average mind what deeper meaning lies hidden in some circumstances or aspects of Nature, or revealing some phase of the inward life. In recounting their names, we pass through that gradation whereby inspiration shades off into aspiration; we learn to interpret the impulse by the achievement; we see in the depth of hue at the centre of the flower the pure colour which in its fainter *nuance* we might hardly distinguish. Could we say as much of any group of our day with which it would be natural to compare them? As little, surely, as we could find among them a Tennyson. Our time has turned to Science, and poetry seems somehow to belong to the past. That it belongs to the future also we firmly believe; but the present is rich in other directions—material progress, inventions, ‘knowledge of the things we see,’ and the Invisible has grown dim, like the stars just above the electric light.

The double relation illustrated by the lives of the theologian and the poet seems gathered up in a relation to one who was both a poet and a theologian. The Apostles, we have said, were Apostles of nobody. We feel it hardly a qualification of that statement to add that we can trace in several of them the influence of Coleridge. It was an influence which no earnest young man in the first thirty years of our century could altogether escape. It embodied reverence for the past, it made room for hopes of the future. In the clash of political animosity, in the disappointment of enthusiasm, in the weariness of ancient and out-worn formulas, and the sense of their necessity as barriers against a flood of fanaticism not less devastating because it was negative, the teacher who sought to reconcile the future with the past, to infuse into the ideas of the new age the decisions of the old, was hailed with rapture. While doctrines that had seemed a gospel were, through the history of France, indelibly associated with rapine and bloodshed, Coleridge distilled into minds sickened with this dis-



appointment reviving thoughts borrowed from the great enemy of France; he taught Wordsworth unawares to weave the ideas of German philosophy into his verse; he brought those ideas into that current of intelligent speculation where nascent genius joins with mature mediocrity, and constitutes the spirit of an age. From one, born about the same time as most of the Apostles—*i.e.* a little after the beginning of the century, but who took a path totally divergent from theirs, we find a recognition of the place of Coleridge in thought which seems to us admirably to explain his influence. John Mill says of the school which Coleridge represents for Englishmen, that they did exactly what he blamed the philosophers of the eighteenth century for not doing—*i.e.* they attempted to disentangle the kernel from the husk of truth. ‘No one can calculate,’ he says, ‘what struggles which the cause of improvement has yet to undergo might have been spared, if the philosophers of the eighteenth century had done anything like justice to the past.’ Surely it is no small tribute to any thinker that one who disagrees with his fundamental assumptions should urge that this was a lacune which he tried to fill.

It is, perhaps, through Carlyle’s *Life of Sterling* that Coleridge’s external aspect has been best made known to those who never saw him. Whether anything more was made known it may be doubted; it appears to us that if John Sterling had known that such an account of his teacher was to be written, and wished to confute it beforehand, he could not have done better than write some of the letters contained in this book. However, it would be beside the purpose of our endeavour here to criticise the portrait, and if we embarked on such a criticism we should perhaps be led into the perilous avowal that, in our opinion, the biography of John Sterling should not have been attempted by Thomas Carlyle. The vivid, fascinating personality, a magnet for all hearts within its circuit, under that brilliant light of promise which it is impossible, at times, not to mistake for the glory of achievement, yet softened by a certain mist in which the brightness is diffused and as



it were spiritualised—this does not seem to us a subject for the pencil which has made it familiar to the world. We doubt whether it was a subject for any great artist. For our own part, at all events, we turn from the richly hung oil portrait, secure in its position in the gallery of literary favourites, to the timid, hesitating water-colour sketch left us in Sterling's earlier biography by a hand not more loving, perhaps, but far more suited, it seems to us, to record a life in which the chief lesson for the world is the subordination of literary achievement, as an actual influence on the hearts of men, to that immediate influence of soul on soul which emanated from John Sterling. Many a reader of these pages, probably, will recall some one whose presence had exactly that influence which Wordsworth described as the mission of the Poet, 'to add sunshine to daylight,' in whose neighbourhood thought seemed clearer, feeling stronger, the whole being stimulated and vivified, yet who has left nothing to justify this impression for those who never felt it. 'Tell us what he said,' they ask; and they are answered by memoranda as like the recollections they chronicle as dried flowers to an Alpine meadow. If in answer to the appeal one dowered with genius endeavour to construct a picture from these recollections, we suspect, judging from the biography which has made John Sterling's name known to the world, that the result will differ from that of humbler reminiscents mainly in the magnitude of its distortion. We feel at all events that we have been attracted towards one whose eventless life was associated with a character almost magical in its impressiveness more by such fragmentary records as we find in these volumes than by the biography which stands beside the speeches of Cromwell, the battles of Frederick, and the tragedy of the French Revolution. The touch of genius seems to need either the plastic clay of pure imagination, or the solid marble of historic fact. Where it is called on to deal with the shadowy reminiscences of character we should say that its own creative impulse becomes a danger, and ruffles the surface on which the reflections should fall.

Our objections to Carlyle's *Life of Sterling* are by no means exhausted. The biographer seems to us occasionally liable to mistakes arising from a more vulgar source. When he narrates his hero's wooing he has, we believe, substituted fiction for history. He tells us that Sterling, moved by the sight of Miss Barton's tears on hearing of his intention to join the revolutionary expedition to Spain, in which his cousin afterwards perished, suddenly changed his purpose, and turned his announcement into a declaration of love; and we are further informed that this statement is made 'on authority.' But we do not learn that Mr. Carlyle had it from either of the persons principally concerned, and we venture to doubt either of them having imparted the information. Carlyle's 'authority' is not, to those who best knew Mrs. Sterling, sufficiently free from doubt to outweigh their impression of her character, and is besides inconsistent with the account of the same circumstances given correctly by the earlier biographer and older friend. 'He longed,' Archdeacon Hare tells us, when the insurrection in 1830 (in Spain) broke out, 'that Torrijos should take the lead in it, and he . . . would gladly have accompanied his friend in the ill-fated expedition, which terminated in his execution at Malaga. But Sterling's health unfitted him for such a work, his presence in England was needed for the managing of the correspondence, so that Torrijos insisted on his remaining as a condition indispensable to the success of the enterprise.' Sterling was bound to submit to the judgment of Torrijos, the responsible head of the undertaking, as to the manner in which he could best further it, and if he gave up his intention for him, he did not give it up for any one else. Carlyle's account betrays unmistakably the readiness with which he accepted disparaging stories even of his own friends, and we would urge this particular specimen of it as a softening reflection on those who are obliged to remember imputations of a more serious character, made against people for whom he had no friendship. It cannot justify those imputations, but it shows that he was curiously ignorant as to what gives



pain, and may elsewhere not have realised the scope of his own words.

Some part of the charm of these fragmentary, almost boyish letters from John Sterling, perfumed as they are with a sort of light-hearted camaraderie, may lie in the very slightness and fragmentariness which at once supplies imagination with material and leaves it space to work. While under the imperious spell of a definite and peculiar style and within the limits of a complete narrative, the reader is constantly tempted to ask, Is this all? He is never tempted to this question by such letters as those in which John Sterling begs Richard Trench to recover for him a little MS. book left at Cambridge, which, if his friend effects, he shall be ranged 'between Jeremy Bentham and Jacob Behmen'—a good indication of his range of sympathies if the distinguished pair were chosen on any other principle than that of alliteration. 'Pray let me see you as soon as you reach London,' he concludes, 'and, in the meantime, commend me to the brethren, who I trust are waxing daily in religion and radicalism.' Whether these are coupled on the same principle as Bentham and Behmen we know not. About the same time he tells us that his first work, a pamphlet called *Joseph Sternwall*, justified the sagacity of the wish, 'Oh that mine enemy had written a book!' and falls back on the consolation that 'all men commit not only crimes but blunders at some time or other.' He seems to have been very little daunted by this failure, for in his next letter we find that he has consoled himself, under a curious form of tribulation, by an excursion into a different kind of literature. 'Just do consider the martyrdom to which good and great men are exposed! I was going to be stoned at Cambridge for being an enemy of religion, and now I am ground to powder by a Mill in London for excessive piety—

“What consoles me, dost thou ask?

The conscience, friend, to have writ a melodrame

In two long acts, a most prodigious task,

Whereat shall hiss the critic geese of Thame.”

Of this melodrama we know as little as of the persecution



(from *John* Mill, we presume, for James Mill was not likely to take the trouble to grind a youth of two-and-twenty to powder), but we may take it as a proof of the exuberance of youthful activity which somehow seems a part of the charm of his character. About the same time (May 16, 1828) we find him much excited by a three hours' conversation with Wordsworth, whose freedom from 'the slightest tendency to be wearied or disgusted with human nature, or to be indifferent towards the common little objects, occurrences, and people around him,' strikes him as admirable, and more than could be expected from a great poet. 'All his daily fireside companionable sympathies are as sensitive and good-humoured as ever. . . . His talk is as different from Coleridge's as can be; and if considered separately from what we know of the man, is certainly far less interesting. Coleridge's monologue is, perhaps, better even than his writing. For it is as profound, as nobly and precisely expressed; while it exhibits more of the union of poetry and philosophy than any of his books, either in verse or prose, and is, perhaps, more fresh and flowing, and a little more adapted to ordinary comprehension than either the *Friend* or the *Biographia*, not because it deals with less important subjects, or treats them less thoroughly, but because it abounds rather more in illustration, displays more variety of style, is helped by the most expressive voice in the world, by the most speaking face, and an eye the very organ of benevolent wisdom. Coleridge is the philosopher in conversation by being all philosopher, and Wordsworth by not affecting to be it at all. The conversation of the latter springs from and is coloured by the immediate circumstances; is full of observation and kindness, and refers directly to the people he is among. Coleridge, without much attention to time or place, pours out his mind in reflection, and it is only marked by particular circumstances or facts, inasmuch as it seems to have habitually absorbed the outward world into its own substance. Coleridge is, I think, the greater man, and in no degree the less amiable; but Wordsworth is better adapted to society. I shall see them

together to-morrow evening, and if I can find time, I shall make no excuses for writing to you again on the subject, as I know you will be interested by obtaining notices of such minds, even through so imperfect a medium as my observation.' Alas! the promised account was either not written or not preserved. Perhaps the meeting of two men of genius justified the *Spectator's* 'too many plums and not enough suet.' Coleridge's influence is also commemorated here in the record of the impressions derived from a recent visit to France. 'What Coleridge calls the manly character,' writes Sterling in 1828, 'is very rare, and in the best specimens very imperfect.' We see the meaning of Coleridge's name being brought in here in the next sentence. 'Among the men a little older than ourselves . . . who of course are the strength of the country, the prevailing tone is that of ridicule and incredulity, not merely as regards religion, but as to *ideas* in general.' Do not the words (though strictly applying to men who have now all passed away) throw a strong light on the phenomenon recently noticed (under a very unfortunate description, to our mind) as the disillusionment of France? His further description is worth quoting. 'The Continental philosophy of the eighteenth century undervalued Christianity because it looked at all religions with equal contempt. The Continental philosophy of the nineteenth undervalues it because it looks at all with equal respect, and is as far in the one case as in the other from comprehending rightly the wants of the individual mind. Cousin makes it the peculiar glory of our epoch that it endeavours to comprehend the mind of all other ages. And I fear it must be the tendency of his philosophy, while it examines what all other philosophies were, to prevent us being anything ourselves. We must do more than clearly understand in what way the various religions have resolved such great problems as those of freewill and necessity, for instance; we must also do it for ourselves. We must live not only for the past, but also for the present. And herein is the great merit of Coleridge: and I confess for myself I would rather be a believing



Jew or Pagan than a man who sees through all religions, but looks not with the eye of any. I dare say I have been writing nonsense, but I have a meaning, if I knew how to express it.' A man of two-and-twenty who could thus discriminate the tendency of the present and the near past, might surely have given us some contribution to the philosophy of history, even in his short life, if it had been free from the withering influence of ill-health. One other thought of his which will remind every reader of a famous passage from the pen of Cardinal Newman, bears so well the dangerous comparison it invites, that we will leave it as the last word from John Sterling. 'How often one finds in life that an idea which one may have met in youth made visible in words but also veiled in them, and which in this shape has haunted one with a dim sense of something divine and inscrutable, becomes at the call of conscience, or when real events and beings give it its fit body . . . a messenger from heaven, and the familiar friend of one's after days.'

If the friendship of genius has been a doubtful blessing to the memory of John Sterling, the aureole with which it has encircled the brow of another of the Apostles has none but a pure and harmonising radiance. Not, indeed, that the portrait drawn in *In Memoriam* has much individuality: we make out no idiosyncrasy of feature or expression, only a vague image of purity and beauty, seen through a mist of tears. The memoir of the father is even less enlightening than the threnody of the friend. 'I was pleased with the simplicity, and even dignity, of the memoir,' writes one of the less known of the Apostles (on whose words, however, we would gladly linger), W. B. Donne, but we feel that he already possessed a clear outline of the career just closed, and needed only a colouring of appropriate feeling. To a reader who seeks information concerning Arthur Hallam, this memoir is disappointingly meagre: it contains, indeed, very few paragraphs which would not be applicable to every young man of promise who went to either University. 'Ardent in the cause of those he deemed to be oppressed, of which, in one instance, he was led to give a proof with more



of energy and enthusiasm than discretion'—is there any generous and enthusiastic young man of whom that might not be said? Surely we might have been taken into confidence about anything so public as Arthur Hallam's sympathy with the wrongs of Spain and the disastrous expedition of Torrijos, this, we presume, being the cause here veiled in distant and obscure allusion. But in truth the very dumbness of the one who could have told us most of his short sojourn in this world is the most eloquent testimony to what he was. It is evident that every word reopened a wound that would not heal. That rush of anguish when the father, writing letters beside the sofa where he supposed his son to be sleeping off a headache, suddenly realised that the closed eyes would never open more, seems to have returned upon him when he tried to speak in detail of all he had lost, and one is tempted to regret that he did not make over the pen to some one of the many whose appreciation was as fervent, and whose grief was less overwhelming. It is not a wise regret. The commemoration of such a spirit in immortal verse is not helped by any attempt to translate it into prose: such a commemoration, probably, would but have suggested some variation in the remarks made above on Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*. The memory of such a spirit as Arthur Hallam's is like the memory of those hours of tranquil happiness which one of the Apostles has warned us never to try to set 'in fair, rememberable words.' It should melt into the atmosphere of life, and live in high aspiration and loyal devotion, but it should rarely be presented to the critical world as an object which language can transfer.

On the other hand, the poem which makes every word from or about Arthur Hallam interesting, seems to us one of the most important of our time. It stands on the boundary of the period to which we recur. It was published twelve years before the *Origin of Species*, yet it has many a verse which seems to anticipate and address that group of feelings and beliefs bound up with the watchword, 'Natural Selection.' It accepts that *supernatural* selection which was, until our own day, a part

of the background of thought, undiscovered, it might be, by dim eyes, questioned or even denied by eager and baffled vision, but always assumed till it had to be given up, always felt as an object of national recognition, so that one made oneself in some sense less of an Englishman in denying it. And yet, from the standpoint of the poet, at that date, all which makes against that view is fully recognised. 'Nature, red in tooth and claw,' already shrieks against faith in God. The belief of our day—

‘That each who seems a separate whole  
Should move his rounds, and fusing all  
The skirts of self again, should fall  
Remerging in the general soul’—

is answered by the deep consciousness, 'I shall know him when we meet.' The tendency of our generation to blur all distinction of right and wrong is not only recognised, but felt, yet still is answered with stern decision—

‘Hold thou the good, define it well,  
For fear divine Philosophy  
Should push beyond her mark, and be  
Procuress to the lords of Hell.’

And then again the answer is answered. Everywhere the ideas of the present are confronted by the convictions of the past, and the question—

‘Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature sends such evil dreams?’

gathers up the conflict of the two in fewer words than we should have thought possible. The largeness and simplicity of the thought are a tribute as much to the subject as to the writer of the poem, and we need no other tribute to him.

Perhaps every other tribute must be disappointing in comparison, yet every mention of his name in these memorials is to us full of interest. We turn to these glimpses as eagerly as to some record of the life ended by that—

‘Fatal and perfidious bark,  
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark  
That sank so low the sacred head’—

of the friend of Milton, and we find more than one passage



among these fragments from which many a line of classic charm gains meaning and beauty. 'In that kingdom, where there will be neither marrying nor giving in marriage,' he writes to Trench in 1832, 'I think there will be wedded affection, for though the nature be glorified, yet it is human nature still.' Must not some such words have been in the mind of Tennyson when he wrote—

‘And dear as sacramental wine  
To dying lips is all he said’?

We will add an extract peculiarly expressive, it seems to us, of a pure and modest nature:—

‘The more cheering aspect of your affairs,’ he writes to Trench in 1832, ‘encourages me to say a word which I had hitherto withheld, not from want of confidence, but from a feeling that I had no right to obtrude the subject. I am now at Sowerby, not only as the friend of Alfred Tennyson, but as the lover of his sister. An attachment on my part of two years’ standing and an engagement of one year are, I fervently hope, only a commencement of a union which the grave may itself not conclude. My father imposed a very unpleasant but very natural prohibition, not to come here till of age, so that it is but just now that I have been able to reap in actual enjoyment of her society any fruits of that assurance which a year since poured a flood of hope on a heart much depressed and benighted.’

The other mentions of or letters from him are mainly of interest as showing how he was to all the band what he was to Tennyson, ‘our dear and delightful friend, Arthur Hallam,’ as Trench writes of him on hearing of his death. He seems to have gathered up, in his two-and-twenty years of life, that sense of completeness which many of us fail to attain in our threescore years and ten. ‘Hallam is an excellent man,’ writes another of the Apostles in 1830, ‘full of high and noble qualities, and is young enough to become a greater and better man than even he is.’ The description suggests a personality that stood apart in the apprehension of all his contemporaries, sealed with the promise of a future distinction which shed back light on his early career. ‘Some one told me,’ writes



Trench in August 1831, 'that Arthur Hallam was reading history with his father, who, I suppose, supplies the facts, and Arthur the philosophy.' The mature historian, we see, was supposed to gain more than he gave even in his instruction. After this, we learn only that Arthur Hallam was disappointed in an eager attempt to obtain a living for Trench through the agency of 'a friend of mine, Gladstone, the new member for Newark'; that he took a strong though somewhat despondent interest in the politics of the day, and that his father was utterly crushed by 'the catastrophe' of his loss. Nothing that is given here, and not much that remains from him anywhere, gives us any independent grounds of judgment as to the high hope he inspired. His prize poem, *Timbuctoo*, was, unless we are misled by a slip of the pen in one of these letters, ascribed at first to Tennyson, but we cannot say that it seems to us to deserve that honour, and on the whole the verses of this gifted and beloved youth have confirmed a strong conviction of ours which ought to be as popular as we believe it to be original—that youth is a very prosaic time of life. We would make an exception in favour of one sonnet, which it seems to us Wordsworth might have written, and with which we will bid him farewell:—

'The garden trees are busy with the shower  
That fell ere sunset; now methinks they talk,  
Lowly and sweetly as befits the hour,  
One to another down the grassy walk.  
Hark, the laburnum from his opening flower  
This cherry creeper greets in whisper light,  
While the grim fir, rejoicing in the night,  
Hoarse mutters to the murmuring sycamore.  
What shall I deem their converse? Would they hail  
The wild grey light that fronts yon massive cloud,  
Or the half bow, rising like pillared fire?  
Or are they sighing faintly for desire  
That with May dawn their leaves may be o'erflowed,  
And dews about their feet may never fail.'

We have already referred to another sonnet which gives the same transfiguring touch to the feelings of average humanity that Arthur Hallam's sonnet gives

to the aspect of average Nature. Its author, Richard Monckton Milnes, if not a great may be called a true poet ; and he has been the friend and helper of many a member of the poetic brotherhood. He does not seem to have been one of the inner circle of the Apostles, and these memorials throw but little light on his character or history. We await a fuller revelation of this from the same pen which has given us the admirable biography of William Forster, and in the meantime have not much to glean here. But none the less is Monckton Milnes a typical figure among the Apostles. The feeling expressed by his verse most perfectly is a sense of the futility and inadequacy in all things earthly, such as comes home forcibly to the mind of one who surveys a youthful group. A life may fulfil all that it promised, may end in a glow of achievement and praise brighter than the glow of its dawn—a life, but not a cluster of lives. As we survey such a cluster, we must often feel the tomb that commemorates bright anticipations much the least mournful record of their existence, we must remember many a slow fading of interest and hope more chilling than the sudden stroke that changed sweet hopes to sad memories. And the reflections into which such experiences pass were never rendered into more musical and thoughtful verse than by Lord Houghton. To the taste of our day his verse may seem somewhat conventional, it does indeed belong to a generation which did not, as ours does, set up individuality as an aim ; but we venture to think that generation by so much the more fitted to understand and achieve what is poetic. The Apostles might surely have found their corporate life expressed and prophesied in the verse that records how an eager group of friends meeting by an Italian lake, sought first to record a vow—

‘ That on this same day  
Each rolling year shall see us meet again  
In this same place, as far as fate allows  
One day shall stand apart from other days,  
Birthday of inward Life—Love’s Holiday—  
The wedding-day, not of a single pair,  
But of a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys ’—

and how one of the party interposed an eager warning

against the presumptuous institution, and persuades the rest to an exactly opposite conclusion, urging them—

‘Never return! Should we come back, dear friends,  
As you implore us, *we* should not return.  
There must be faded cheeks and sunken eyes,  
And minds enfeebled with the rack of time,  
And hearts grown colder, and it may be cold.’

Was Lord Houghton thinking of the Apostles when he wrote those words? He must have felt their truth illustrated by too many passages of his own life, at first or second hand, to need that particular reference, but, if he did recall it, it would give his words added meaning. More than one of the band, if they had lived to peruse the volume before us, might have echoed words in which he supposes himself to review his youthful letters:

‘Whose is this hand, that wheresoe’er it wanders,  
Traces in light words thoughts that come as lightly?  
Who was the king of all this soul-domain?  
I? Was it mine?  
Surely we *are* by feeling as by knowing  
Changing our hearts, our being changes with them,  
Take them away—these spectres of my boyhood,  
They are not mine.’

In no verse do we find a more delicate, pathetic appreciation of that change of atmosphere through which we look back from age to youth, whether, as in *Past Friendship* or *Lonely Maturity* it discern and lament renounced loyalty, or, as in *The Flight of Youth* mourn over the mere vanishing of the clear morning light, or, in *Mutability* over the exchange of childish affections for the coldness of mature separateness. In none of these is there any originality of thought, but in all there is a translation of average feeling into a definiteness and grace which in average minds it never attains—a translation which, if not the highest work of the poet, is perhaps one of his most valuable gifts to his kind.

Our canvas is filled and our models crowd upon us! We might devote a space equalling that already filled to several single members of the Apostles, whose names we have not mentioned or have not done more than mention



—to Blakesley, to Kemble, to Donne, above all to the figure forming the centre of the group in the picture whence we have borrowed our material: the distinguished writer whose Archbishopric of Dublin forms his least claim to notice, who has enriched our literature with some true poetry, much valuable historic criticism, and no small contribution to theologic thought. To extract from the memories of his life a sketch of his youthful comrades, leaving his portrait a blank, may well seem to represent *Hamlet* with the omission of the hero's part. But we have no choice, and perhaps it is better so. We have sought to return to the past, and to study an important figure in comparatively recent political life would spoil our perspective and confuse our grouping. Richard Trench, the member of 'the Apostles,' is eclipsed by the Archbishop of Dublin. We will have nothing recent on our canvas! We seek clear memories, remote impressions, visions that have the brightness of morning. We would revive the hopes and aspirations of sixty years since, and forget their issue. Omission is an essential part of such an aim, and the limits which shut in our endeavour remind us that even amid its best material selection plays a large part in our work.

## RICHARD HOLT HUTTON

RARELY can it have happened that death brought so keen a sense of personal loss to many homes where it extinguished the light of no familiar countenance as when, on September 9 of this year 1897, it forbade all readers to hope for another word from Richard Hutton. The lay sermons from him had come to be looked for no less eagerly than the letters of an Indian mail day. We cut the *Spectator* with as much confidence as we broke the seal dropped by a friendly hand. The article expressed a relation as well as a judgment; it left the mind stimulated as by news of the beloved absent, cheered as by expressions of affection for oneself. For the same reason, no doubt, there were many to whom it said nothing. The *Spectator*, under Hutton's guidance, addressed rather *a* public than *the* public. It was faithful to a tradition of periodical writing which, disregarded and defied as it is by the chief periodicals of the day, will perhaps be felt by those who compare these later publications with their forerunners to be exactly what makes periodical literature living. A specimen of every opinion of a particular epoch has its own interest, no doubt. It cannot be in any case the ideal of a newspaper; but the *Spectator*, under Mr. Hutton's guidance, was so much more than a newspaper that we naturally compare it with those clusters of writings which in our day aim at little more than this, and the strong aroma of an individual mind affects us as something unique. Let us, before the sympathetic hush of attention pass away, as it passes so soon, gather up and set on record the grounds of an impression so peculiar.

In noting one negative qualification for this influence,

I anticipate no dissentient voice. No one—not even the writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who encloses Richard Hutton's audience within the walls of a Rectory garden—will deny that he abjured, throughout his career, that alliance with scorn which ordinarily supplies journalism with its most pungent condiments. Nothing that he has written is bitter, or stinging, or pregnant with *innuendo*. Think of all that he cut off in that renunciation! Remove ill-nature, and how much of what the world counts wit would remain? Perhaps the best, but how vastly reduced in amount! That removal, at all events, would blunt no single sentence due to his pen; no criticism from him ever wounded a tender memory, or impoverished the springs of creative power in a single mind. Could the same be said of any other journalist of his time? Think over all the temptations to smartness which beset a writer who has to consult the exigencies of the hour, and weigh the renunciation of one who always refused the cheap efficiency of depreciation. I remember well the laugh—not altogether scornful, and perhaps as much at himself as at any one else—of a Saturday Reviewer, who confessed he found it a difficulty in the way of reading the *Spectator*, that it was 'so just.' He was the spokesman of the larger half of the newspaper-reading world. Nothing, indeed, is really less dull than justice. Were it less rare it would be recognised as the spring of literary no less than of moral excellence. But the renunciation of epigram precedes the attainment of that delicate accuracy of interpretation which is as much more satisfying as it is more rare. Perfect justice is perfect literature, but imperfect justice lacks the piquancy of slashing abuse without necessarily attaining the subtle grace of accurate discrimination. It says more for Hutton that he never tried to attain the first of these things than even that he sometimes came very near the last.

Two negative concessions must be made in connection with this negative claim. In the first place we must allow that a critic who aims, above all things, at doing no injustice to any one whom he mentions, whatever his other excellences, will rarely attain that of a simple style.



Justice, either in what we must reluctantly call the true sense of the word as an impartial estimate of praise and blame, or in Hutton's sense of a careful allotment of every word of praise that can sincerely be given, is not a simple thing. The endeavour to strain away from criticism every word that is untrue in itself, and then again every word that, being true in itself, is yet misleading in its general connotation, as so many true words are—this is an endeavour which the exigencies of periodical writing almost inevitably associate with an involved style. There is not time to boil down the substance of every parenthesis into the main sentence, and the frequent use of parenthesis must be accepted, no doubt, as a defect in style. The majority of newspaper readers discovered this defect in Hutton's writings, and their opinion must here stand for a verdict. But for my own part, I never found his meaning obscure after giving the amount of attention which his subject seemed to me legitimately to demand, and his careful parentheses were to me a characteristic expression of his anxious candour. It is only at second-hand, therefore, that I take note of this disadvantage. But it is impossible for any of his admirers not to feel, at times, that the substance as well as the form of his criticism suffered from this cause. His ideal of the critic's office, as far as he carried it out in his own person (and I can remember but few inconsistencies in what he permitted) was like that of a captain described by Xenophon, who 'thought it enough to praise the good, and not to praise the bad.' Whatsoever things were true, whatsoever were sincere, if there were any virtue, and any possible praise, it was Hutton's care to bring these things before the attention of his readers, and he does not seem to have felt it incumbent on him to appraise them in comparison with similar productions, or in any way to graduate his approval. He had hardly any sense of *rank* in literature. It is a very rare defect in a critic, and perhaps we might without loss get a little nearer that ditch before making any attempt to fill it up. The mutual admiration of a clique, no doubt, is common enough. But Hutton's occasionally exaggerated praise, whatever else it was, had no relation

to the mutual admiration of a clique. It might betray the leakage of personal friendship; it never suggested the insurance of a benefit society. He over-praised the unknown, the ineffective; he was a keen critic where his praise might have roused a sonorous response. Still, we must concede that a critic who thinks that the review of a book, like the character of a servant, may *consist of*, and not merely contain, all the recommendation which he can pronounce with absolute sincerity, will sometimes mislead his readers. Proportion is a primary requisite in literature, and one who looks at all excellence apart cannot be accepted as a guide in the paths of literature strictly so called. But it is not on the field of literature strictly so called that we looked for the wise and healing words we shall hear no more. It is in literature as an expression of the deepest truth, literature as an answer to the most profound yearnings of our nature. Surely this must always remain the most perennial realm of literature; and when we say that we met our guide here, we can afford to concede, without much sense of loss, that he sometimes failed us elsewhere.

For this recollection is needed to give us a clue to his best work, and an explanation of any disappointment in the rest. His least satisfactory piece of criticism (though full of charm) seems to me his little biography of Scott. A critic of that great genius must turn to what is mere literature. Mere literature—one shrinks from the epithet! It seems almost like talking of mere life. Still if we compare Scott with other great writers we see that the expression, as characterising his work, is not unmeaning. A more famous attempt to fix his place in literature brings out this limitation with all the force, whatever that may be, of great exaggeration.

‘The great mystery of existence,’ says Carlyle of Scott, ‘was not great to him . . . no man has written so many volumes with so few sentences that can be quoted. The Waverley novels are not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for edification, for building up or elevating in any shape. The sick heart will find no healing here, the darkly struggling heart no guidance, the heroic that is in man no divine awakening voice.’



I can hardly persuade myself to copy words so unjust, but I have conceded that unjust words are not always untrue, and whatever truth there is here shows us that the creative genius of Walter Scott would not be the best fitted to elicit the critical acumen of Richard Hutton. He had a delicate apprehension of what was most characteristic of Scott. I remember his enjoyment of an expression I quoted from Ruskin, who speaks somewhere of Scott's 'far away Æolian note,' and many allusions prove him to have been led towards that biography by real sympathy; nevertheless when he concentrated his attention upon a writer who avoided all the depths of life, his reader felt him not at his best. But now turn to his review of the writer, who of all novelists least avoided these depths, re-read (for every one who reads these lines must have given it one perusal) his review of 'George Eliot as Author,' and you have such a specimen of his true intellectual guidance as will either justify those who leaned upon it, or show a divergence rendering a common view impossible. One is at this date somewhat chary of re-opening a review of George Eliot, so much was written about her at the time merely recording, with that uncritical fervour which so soon becomes vapid, the spell of a great genius dealing with the problems of the hour. But in re-perusing the essay in Hutton's *Leaders of English Thought*, we come upon that enlightening criticism which I remember its object once declaring no less rare than original creation. It is a luminous and pregnant essay on English fiction, rich in expressions which reveal some characteristic feature in every great writer with whom George Eliot could be compared. 'The breadth and spaciousness of Fielding,' 'the delight in rich historic colouring of Scott,' 'the bas-reliefs cut out on the same surface' of Miss Austen and the society novelists—all these phrases, simple as they are, gather up the appreciation of a glance at once penetrating and wide reaching: they are the utterance of a mind in direct contact with that which the reader is taught to appreciate. 'What we care to know of men and women is not so much their special tastes, bias, gifts, humours, as the general depth and mass of the



human nature that is in them'—there we have much more than a clue to the special power of George Eliot. 'There is a concentrated sort of egotism about common novels which is one reason why the interest of them is apt to die away in riper years.' There again you have a general judgment in the form of a special recommendation which anybody can understand and yet which comes to the mind quite freshly. These judgments are all literary, but the critic was guided towards them by his instinct for what lies deeper than literature. It is his discernment that George Eliot was a preacher as well as an artist which enables him to judge her artistic work. 'To banish confusion from a picture,' he says in this essay, 'is the first duty of the artist, and confusion must exist where those lines which are the most essential of all for determining the configuration of character are indistinctly drawn.' Perhaps that sentence may explain the limitations of his criticism, certainly they indicate the powers which made him a welcome guide to many seekers in his generation.

Thirty-six years ago, when the *Spectator* came under his influence, such guidance as his was even more consciously needed than it is at the present day. It was one of those epochs in the history of the world, when men became suddenly conscious of all that is weak in the assumptions of the past, and those among them to whom those assumptions were precious stretched out groping hands, seeking a new guide. A man of science had just startled the world by showing (as it seemed then) that the creation needed no creator. A brave missionary had admitted the atmosphere of rational judgment to that closed chamber where the notion of literal inspiration, like the corpse in a hermetically sealed tomb, crumbled to dust at that admission. A multitude of agencies, of which these were the most obvious and important expressions, converged upon the faith of the past, and either destroyed or expanded it. Men were shown at the same time that the Bible was full of errors, and that the Creation was a process going on at the present day. Either half of the demonstration would have shaken the fabric of ortho-

doxy; combined they shattered it. Those who were driven from its tottering walls found various refuges. Many among them awakened to the discovery that, if it were no longer possible to believe in God, it was quite easy to forget Him, and that, while belief was arduous, distracting, incomplete, oblivion might be absolute. Perhaps the discovery had never been made before. But nothing is so unlike oblivion as hatred, and those who had formerly attacked Christianity were, equally with Fénelon or Whitefield, preachers of its vital importance. For the first time in history since Christianity existed it was possible to ignore Christianity. Nay, it was even found possible, in turning from it, to carry off much that was supposed its inalienable property. The wreck of orthodoxy, it was discovered, had not overwhelmed its treasures, and they who fled the quaking walls carried with them no contemptible proportion of the hoarded wealth. The novels of George Eliot reproduced so much of what had been regarded as Christian feeling and belief that for a long time her simpler readers studied them as pious effusions, and confused her striking aphorisms with texts from the Gospels. The fervour of the pulpit was found also in other writers; and doubtless it was nothing new to find the fervour of the pulpit in an assailant of Christianity, but always previously the true character of this fervour had been forced on the attention of all because it had been employed in a definite attack. But when the mere dictum of science was accepted as making God unnecessary, it became waste of force to explode hypotheses based on His supposed character and operations. They could simply be let alone. 'People with a taste for these chimeras may study them,' it was felt and said; 'we have something better to think of.' And nothing in their lives revealed to the world any moral disaster. On the contrary, there was in many cases the withdrawal of a perturbing influence, which left a great calm.

It was one of the equipments which fitted Richard Hutton to become the guide he was to his generation that he understood this state of mind. I cannot think of any one else who did. Many persons noticed it. Maurice and some of his followers set it down, in their indictments



against the clergy of the English Church, that they had failed to bring the message of their Master to a world which rightly turned from a travesty of His teaching. Except among those who supposed that any one who took no interest in religion must be wicked, or that any one who ignored religion must be courageous, I cannot conceive a greater misunderstanding of the position of the agnostic. It has long since been confuted by the mere existence of the party known as the Broad Church, a party of which the *raison d'être* may be described as the abjuring of theology. But this view did not need any experimental confutation for one who really came in contact with this kind of unbelief. A letter lies before me, written by Richard Hutton about a generation ago, of which I will here copy all that is important, though not the whole of this is relevant to the special point now before us. 'What you say of Ewald,' he addresses his correspondent, 'strikes me as profoundly true. Not only does every line of the history prove that the Jewish people, as a people, did *not* devote themselves to the search for God, but were, first from servility, afterwards from pride and self-confidence, always revolting against His guidance; but I think nothing is more notable about the attitude of their highest prophets than the *involuntary* character, so to speak, of their inspiration. Theirs is not the tone of *searchers* after God, "if haply they might feel after Him and find Him," but of minds constrained to say, not, indeed, unwillingly, as in the case of Balaam, but still *constrained* to say what they did say. It is to invert the very characteristic of the Hebrew literature to speak of their greatest teachers as Platonic feelers after Deity. But do you not feel it strange that so little of this divine constraint of conviction shows itself even among the finest and truest of modern religious writers? Sometimes God seems to me to have intentionally intermitted His action on the self-conscious side of human intellect in these latter days. Witness the remains of A. H. Clough (one of the finest and truest of modern poets—a man whom I knew well and honoured deeply) who gives it as his repeatedly expressed conviction:



“It seems His newer will  
We should not think of Him at all . . .  
But of the world He has assigned us, make  
What best we can.”

‘Such belief,’ he goes on, ‘seems to me inconceivable, yet I clearly follow the series of spiritual disappointments which led Mr. Clough to adopt it seriously as God’s real will for the modern world.’

As I copy the last sentence, after the interval of so many years from the first perusal of the letter, I see afresh how that double vision of the reasonableness and unreasonableness of Agnosticism qualified Hutton to be the religious teacher of our generation. He had nothing more to say of this averted attention than that he understood it. I do not suppose that is all there is to say about it. But he who saw it, and saw beyond it, was fitted to deal with the problems of our time as no one was who missed its significance, or distorted its explanation. Forty years ago almost every religious thinker seemed to me to do one of these things. It was alike bewildering to be told either that the sudden oblivion of the Eternal which came upon us then as definitely as the dropping of a curtain was a mere inference from an exceptional case here and there, or that this vast eclipse was due to misstatements in sermons which had not been heard and books which had not been read. How refreshing, when wearied with an endeavour to extract some nutriment from either assurance, to turn to one of those weekly essays which always put us in contact with the facts of life! It is difficult to justify this sense of refreshment; perhaps it will hardly be understood by those who study his books. Important documents for the student of the spiritual life of the nineteenth century, these volumes cannot reproduce the sense of greeting, of encouragement, of stimulus brought by him to an audience listening week by week for his voice in the *Spectator*. Those who try to give an account of any such influence will always, I believe, be astonished to find how much of it is negative. A blank cannot console; a blank cannot stimulate—no, but what we need is contact with some broad stream of thought and

feeling that a blank will often admit. Some of the hardest and most scornful atheism of our day has been probably provoked into expression (of course, not created) by the endeavours which originated in sympathy with its supposed perplexities. Nothing so stiffens and hardens unbelief as the attitude which, in confusing it with doubt, betrays an incapacity to apprehend any part of its real ground. And hence it happened that, from the very start of the *Spectator*, the Broad Church was a subsiding influence in religious life. Whatever it may have accomplished in Christian work, in literature, in ecclesiastical organisation, all competent to judge will allow that, as a force in thought, it went for almost nothing. The name of one great leader of thought is sometimes associated with it; but Maurice had no real sympathy with its aims, nor, to say the truth, any clear insight into the difficulties it confronted. A clear recognition of those difficulties, a steady glance beyond them—if this seem a small thing, it can be only to one who has never known these difficulties. Triumphant wrong—unpurifying pain—these things, alas! are as old as humanity. What could any work on the origin of species do to enforce the cogency of their terrible argument against the existence of a divine Father? This, that for the first time it provided a coherent, workable hypothesis of Creation which ignored the existence of a Divine Creator. The notion of an automatic creation forced on the intellect a question that had never ceased to torment the heart—Why believe in anything above nature? With the attempt to justify an affirmative answer, its difficulties sprang into sudden illumination. Any daily paper was a refutation of the belief in the Divine for one who had leaned heavily on the old view of a Creator, and found it suddenly give way; the list of ordinary casualties and crimes seemed suddenly to need some explanation that had become unattainable. It was discovered then by some who still found support on the old ground that faith in God is, in its simplest form, a mystic faith. A critic in the *Times*, who shows himself intimately penetrated with sympathy for what was most characteristic in the writing of Richard Hutton, says that he was not prone to mysti-



cism. He who, as the same critic happily expresses it, 'gave shape and intellectual cogency to what in others were aspirations, vague, unsatisfied desires' was certainly the very opposite of a mystic in the sense in which the word is sometimes used, of making feeling do duty for intellect. But, if we may not say that the mystic element in faith was what gave Hutton the power above described, then we must find some other word to express that element. When one turned from any Broad Church utterance to an essay from his pen, one felt not so much that there was any difference of actual belief—it might be that the views were precisely identical—but that he was moving in a different direction. *Il mare mi chiama*, says the Venetian fisherman. What is it that 'calls' each one of us? What magnet determines the curve of our thought? We must look beyond the actual movement to answer that question. On a vast scale the tangent and the circle are for a time indistinguishable; they who are about to part company for ever may for a long period, as men reckon time by months and years, appear inseparable allies. What 'called' Richard Hutton was the truth of a sacramental belief. The pure theism of his youth melted into those convictions which find their justification in the discernment that language can convey adequately only such truth as belongs ultimately to the deliverance of the senses; that, for the truth which appeals to what is deepest in man, words are mere signposts, and facts—what in some form we must call experience—the road that leads to our goal. A sacramental Church, where it is understood, is felt to be no enclosure shutting in an exotic principle inapplicable to ordinary life, but a fertile spot exhibiting the true character of all indistinct and impoverished growth around. 'Take, eat; this is my body broken for you,' is an address heard not only within the sacred walls; it is converted there to a promise, but it is heard everywhere. 'To them that are without, these things are done in parables'—are *done* (*γίνεται*) in parables, not told in them.

This growing approach towards a faith at the opposite pole from the rationalism of his youth seems to me traceable throughout all the writings of Richard Hutton.



It explains the strange rumour of these later years, that he had joined the Catholic Church. He had a great sympathy, no doubt, with some doctrines of the Catholic Church. I remember his speaking to me of an interesting passage in the life of Charles Dickens—his dream that he met once more a dear friend returned from the world beyond the grave, and in answer to his eager inquiry what was the best religion, was told by her, ‘*For you, the Roman Church is the best.*’ ‘And I can imagine,’ said Mr. Hutton (whose repetition of the story is my authority for it, as I never read the book), ‘that those words were true. The Roman Catholic religion *would* very likely have been the best for him.’ If any one thinks that there is no one for whom Roman Catholicism would supply the best discipline, these words, no doubt, will tell us an implicit surrender to the Roman claims. To measure the distance of such discernment from such a surrender would delay us in a tangle of truisms. But it remains that the great historic Church owes its permanence to its hold on the truth of spiritual life, as manifested in fact rather than expressible in words. It is a truth which will always appeal with a peculiar force towards a Unitarian whose faith expands. No writing of Hutton’s so reveals his deepest thought as that essay which gives an intellectual outline to his later faith. ‘The Incarnation, and Principles of Evidence’ sets forth, under what seems to me an unfortunate title, the aspect under which a divine Son appealed to a heart always faithful to the belief in a divine Father. Are we the children of God, as Hamlet and Othello are the children of Shakespeare—beings whom he has invented, and in our case endowed with sentient and conscious existence? Or are we the children of God as that little namesake of Hamlet, whom the poet laid to rest in a green Warwickshire churchyard, was a child of Shakespeare?<sup>1</sup> Is human paternity, besides being the greatest *fact* of human history, also an expression of something that transcends human history? Is it a sacrament as well as a human relation? This question was that which Hutton set himself to answer in the explana-

<sup>1</sup> Hamnet Shakespeare, the only son of the poet, died in childhood.

tion of his change of belief, which he gave to the series of *Tracts for Priests and People*, and which, with some omissions very significant for the rapid growth of a sacramental faith, he afterwards included in his collected essays. He sought therein to explain the degree in which he felt the great truths of theology dependent on the verdict of historical criticism, and justified the claim that even events, when they were also symbols, should be so far emancipated from that dependence as to be contemplated, to some extent, by their own light. We may feel the existence of a divine elder brother so real, that the fact of his entrance on human history may need even *less* evidence than the birth (for instance) of a son to Julius Cæsar. The *minus* of evidential force noted by the intellect in all that deals with the supernatural may be cancelled by the *plus* of evidential force that springs from what the spirit of man recognises as most profoundly natural.

It is but following out this train of thought on the other side to suggest a connection between the events of a particular career and the convictions of an individual mind; and the earliest work from the pen of Richard Hutton, though perhaps not in other ways what his admirers would wish to bring forward—for, in truth, it shows little of his strength—is a legitimate quarry of information about him. Hutton's expansion of faith was preceded, whether or not it was influenced, by a vast grief. The wife of his youth was torn from him after a mere moment of union. Perhaps even that moment was overshadowed by the coming separation. Across the interval of half a century comes back her dignified, serious aspect, shrouded in a sort of remoteness, like one whose fine ear catches a distant summons, inaudible to surroundings. The anguish with which he mourned her was soothed by the sympathy of her brother, an author of various pieces in verse and prose, which Hutton edited after his early death. The volumes dedicated to the remains of William Caldwell Roscoe chronicle a wonderfully close friendship, enshrine some verses breathing the atmosphere of true poetry, and recall to one or two



persons still living an engaging personality, fragrant with playfulness and pathos—one of those recollections which one is surprised to find so distinct and yet so unjustifiable by remembered words or actions. He would have deprecated the attempt at a literary memorial, I should fancy, as earnestly as his brother-in-law has done, but this ‘gathering up the fragments’ was much more to Hutton than the expression of an exaggerated admiration for a dear friend. It was also, I cannot doubt, a training for sympathetic appreciation of all inchoate and imperfect utterance of true thought. Perhaps it was even more than this. It has sometimes happened that death has been a greater revealer than life. It is possible that the endeavour to recall the incidents of a somewhat disappointing career, the grounds of an indestructible impression, may have been such a lesson as to the meaning of the Unseen as nothing else could have given. It is interesting, at any rate, to note the seed of the later faith of Richard Hutton in a remark from one who never shared it. He tells us, in the prefatory memoir which he prefixed to these *Remains*, that his brother-in-law once, in speaking of what was then their common Unitarian faith, said to him: ‘The simplicity of the doctrine of the unity of God is urged in its favour, but I do not know that I always feel this; I am not sure it is not *too* simple to be the full truth.’ ‘I gathered his meaning to be,’ Hutton goes on, ‘that a voluntary self-revelation of the Divine Mind might have been expected to reveal even deeper complexities of spiritual relations in the eternal nature and essence than are found to exist in our humanity—the simplicity of a harmonised complexity, not the simplicity of absolute unity. But the remark was one of those which often fell from him in his higher imaginative moods without seeming to hang together with any permanent train of thought in his own mind.’ The work from which these words are taken was published in the opening of 1860, and they show that for seven years after his early bereavement the faith of his youth had undergone no substantial change; but seven years is not a long interval for a new influence to work underground. A



great sorrow either destroys trust in God, or allies it with a sense of mystery. He who feels both that God is a Father, and that a crushing blow is from His hand, is prepared, by other than intellectual or even spiritual discipline, to break through the limits of a merely rational faith. Those who can trust God through anguish enter on new views of His relation to the world. Every page of Hutton's tract on the Incarnation is an attempt to show that it presented itself to him as a dynamic truth—as something bearing on the conditions of the spiritual life as a true understanding of the nature of oxygen bears on the conditions of the animal life. It was to him a mystery, not in the sense in which we ordinarily use the word, as something without any intelligible meaning for us but which we accept on account of our trust in the speaker or writer, but rather a mystery in the true etymological sense, a jewel in a locked casket, of which we do or may possess the key. As a *fact* it was an event in the history of Judæa, rightly disbelieved by those who demand for it the evidence adequate to an extraordinary and unprecedented event. But as a *doctrine* it is a principle giving to the perplexities of human life all the explanation which they are capable of receiving—showing, that is, that all the experience, and therefore all the duty, of humanity, has its root in the Divine Nature, and that man, not only when he exercises justice and mercy, but when he resigns himself to a higher Will and accepts the allotment of a hard fate, draws on a spring of strength that is in very truth divine.

The foregoing notice may appear to linger unduly on Hutton's theological attitude. It was only one side of his efficiency as editor of the *Spectator*. He would not, indeed, have been so effective a theological guide if he had not been much besides. His influence sprang from the fact that he never shrank from tracking the principles of Divine judgment into the concrete applications of the day. He did not stop at the decision which satisfies some elevating and inspiring teachers—'so far as you follow out this or that principle you are true to your own ideal, so far as you admit self-seeking or partial impulse you

are false to what you yourself have set up as an ultimate claim.' He entered on the more arduous and perilous position—'*this* is the side which incorporates most of those impulses which lead towards truth—*that* gathers up, on the whole, what opposes it.' Of course he could not be a political writer without doing so, but very few political writers are so much besides. He committed himself to special applications of the inferences from eternal truth, and proved his devotion to an ideal by following it across the track of an admired teacher and even against the whole urgency of his influence. He is admitted by respectful but decided opponents to have been a force on the side of our national union, a tribute to his political weight which could be given to no other spiritual teacher of this century. Few indeed are the leaders of thought who turn, as he did, both to the heights of eternal principles, and to the valleys of concrete application. But these descents into the realm of the concrete need no review from one who seeks to gather up what was most characteristic in him. They open the region of the temporary, they bring to mind divergence, and where they bring to mind close agreement and warm encouragement they do not, somehow, revive what one so much seeks to revive as one looks backward. In some respects Richard Hutton was an opponent of the reforms I thought needful. He was a decided and persistent opponent of female suffrage. He always urged that the only advocates of female suffrage who had any case were those who sought to represent women as women, and that the ideal of simply not *preventing* a qualified elector from voting on account of sex, which is what seems to me the true principle, was a mere transient resting-place in an inevitable descent. I recur to the controversy only to mark the independence of his position. His sympathies would have been naturally all on the side of woman. He felt the woman's point of view on every subject on which a woman's point of view can be said to exist. But he also felt, and I wish they were more generally felt, the disadvantages of representing a class which outweighs all others, and yet cannot furnish a single soldier. I think



it was in great measure his strong sympathy with women which led him to suppose their cause might be safely intrusted to representatives of whom all had a mother, and almost all a wife or a sister. If it was an error, it was not the exclusiveness of a narrow nature, but the delusion of one which supposed its own expansive sympathies an inheritance of the race.

His injunction that no memoir of him should be given to the world is in harmony with all the expectations roused by any knowledge of his character. He was one of the least egotistic of men. It is possible indeed that some little flaws of graciousness felt now and then in personal intercourse would have been avoided if one so kindly had had a more adequate sense of his own importance. I cannot think that anything here written sins against that injunction. I merely seek to record the impression which one of those who for thirty years have listened to his voice took of that which he himself gave to the world—to harmonise for my fellow-listeners his various utterances and gather up in grateful memory the message which lay at the heart of all. I do not write for the public; I write for his audience. The attempt to interpret him to a wider circle would be checked, if by no other reason, by the reminder, always sounding in my ears:

‘Non far, chè tu se’ ombra, e ombra vedi.’

## A STUDY OF CARLYLE

THE winter of 1880-81 will leave a long trace in the memory of many of our contemporaries. The inclement season has ended two lives—one above, one below the average duration of man's sojourn in this world—which have played a great part in the mental history of their time. The common season of their departure records a revolution of thought. Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot, though separated by the interval of a bare generation, represented two intellectual eras:—the great Englishwoman who has made fiction the vehicle of an impressive moral doctrine belongs wholly to the present; the great Scotchman who has done the like by history belongs to a phase of development that we have already left far behind us. With all the characteristic tendencies of the day he was out of sympathy, with most of them we might say he was out of relation. His figure stands out clearly only in the light of the past. To our own mind we confess there is something very refreshing in the sense that everything given forth in the latest dialect, and bearing the brand-new stamp from the mint of to-day's speculation, may be laid aside in the attempt to estimate a contemporary. There is a repose in this return to the past that unites in a wonderful manner the charm of things new and old. For from this point of view we may say that the old is new, absolute novelty passes unrecognised from the mind, we must remember before we truly recognise. The world that lies within the scope of recollection is the only world which we can truly know, and it is to a part of this Past, most accessible to memory, yet divided by an impassable chasm from the experience of the present hour, that we would invite the reader's attention. We would lead him



away from the din and the stir of to-day to contemplate, not only a finished life, but a vanished world.

It may seem strange to write thus of one from whose pen a new production is put into our hands as we write.<sup>1</sup> A new book from Thomas Carlyle! What memories revive at the words! We breathe again an atmosphere of vague, vast possibility, we live once more in the sudden sense of wealth with which every one first yields himself up to the influence of a great genius. And how many a grave gives up its dead! How as at a magician's wand do the tones revive—the very accent and cadences, though the words escape our longing ear—of voices unheard through long years, and never on this earth to be heard again. Is it always so as we recall a great man? do the memories of those who loved and admired him always revive with such vividness? or was there in this man some special virtue, which drew from others a characteristic appreciation, and made the thought of him a harmony rather than a keynote? Perhaps both are true. Carlyle was a man greatly beloved; he inspired an affection that in those who knew him best was blended at once with pity and with reverence, and we could fancy that even his faults deepened the peculiar kind of interest which was thus roused in a small circle, and to some extent passed on to a much larger one at second-hand. His conversation has been called more striking than his writing.<sup>2</sup> We suspect that view is due to some confusion between the added impressiveness which any words of a great writer gain when they come to our ear associated with the living presence, and added impressiveness in the words themselves. He was not a sufficiently good listener to be a brilliant converser; his writings are full of wit; but *vivâ voce* wit implies an attention to what other people say, of which he was incapable; and the most assiduous Boswell would have compiled from listening to him, we suspect, little but a repetition of some part of his writings, and a collection of jokes which, apart from the laughter that is

<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences*. By Thomas Carlyle. Edited by J. A. Froude. 2 vols. Longmans.

<sup>2</sup> In an article in the *Cornhill Magazine* for March.

so much more distinct on the ear of memory than its cause, would seem hardly worth chronicling. But though we think the expression to which we refer is exaggerated, yet it is impossible to exaggerate the impressiveness of the mere aspect and manner of the man. No one would have passed him over in a crowd; if one had been told that he was in a room with fifty other men there would seldom have been any danger of mistake in guessing which was the man of genius. Thus a transient glimpse was enough to fix all second-hand record, and to have seen him once was to keep a sensitive plate ready for all the photography of subsequent impression, through whomsoever transmitted. He was, as his friend Thomas Erskine used to say of him, 'a vernacular man'—the most vernacular of men, and the impression left in the minds of his contemporaries is the most unique, probably, they have ever known. The *Reminiscences* in our hands seem thus lost in those which they awaken. The thought of what he was is a larger thing than any contribution to our knowledge of him, even from his own pen. As we turn the page, many a name and many a date seem to unlock the actual past, and lead away from the narrative that contains them. The genius expands till the vessel which has contained his form is forgotten; he reaches the clouds, and we cannot believe that he was ever inclosed in the jar that lies tangled in the fisherman's net at our feet. But on that vessel itself we must say a few preliminary words.

It is very important to remember that this book is not a work of Carlyle's in the sense that any previous book has been so. His editor reminds us in the Preface that not only have these records received no revision from his pen, but that it may be said of a large part 'perhaps it was not intended for publication.' Carlyle has left a retrospect which Mr. Froude, with a strange haste, almost suggesting the notion that he had no trust in the permanence of the interest to which the book appeals, has taken the responsibility of putting before the public. The mingled authorship is satisfactory to Carlyle's admirers, for we at least do not remember to have read any record of a great man with feelings so mingled as those with which we have perused



these two volumes. His picture of his father is the most beautiful filial tribute that we know in literature, and will inspire every reader with a real reverence for the noble peasant who seems to have united the tolerance of a large-hearted thinker with the deep faith of a Puritan. The account of Irving also has much beauty, and a keen biographical interest. But had it lain with us to decide whether these materials for a biography should have been published as they are, or not published at all, we should have found it difficult to decide between alternatives which would have seemed to us almost equally deplorable. The way that they are put before the reader recalls Carlyle's own outcry against writers who have edited 'as you edit broken bricks and mortar, simply by tumbling up the wagon.' Surely this is to disguise, not to interpret, the illustrious Dead. We do not reveal a man when we give to the public what his mature, deliberate judgment would have withheld; nor does any sense of enlightenment afford compensation for the pain with which we have read much that is given here. Whatever was given to the world from the pen of our greatest literary man should at least have been a contribution to literature, and that which at first sight will most jar on the critical reader is the spiritual indecency (as it seems to us) of publishing these wailings for his wife. To print, as the poor feeble hand left them on the very morrow of the shock which appears for the time to have enfeebled his mind, those incoherent jottings, with their tangled parentheses and their incessant repetitions, seems to us the same kind of mistake as to exhibit some sketch by a great master, almost blotted out by his tears. It is a pathetic blur, but not a portrait. The piquant image, where something of French brilliancy mingles with the Scotch raciness—the bright, half-formidable, but kindly creature who might have made Carlyle known as her husband, if she had not been known as his wife, has vanished utterly, and in its place we have mere blotted colour. Hid in its portfolio, the sketch was something sacred: we can imagine those who had a right to gaze on it drawing it forth reverently, and feeling their own eyes moisten at the sight. But



hung on the Academy walls, the effect is far otherwise. We, who find it there, can only pass it in mournful silence.

For our own part, however, the exposure of the feebleness of sorrow is not what we most regret in these volumes. This at least is a tribute to a deep love, though not the kind of tribute we would have given to the world, and we can understand the temptation to give the world all that speaks of a deep love. But the temptation to publish some of these specimens of Carlyle's scorn is utterly unintelligible to us. His criticisms of Lamb and Wordsworth seem to us to teach us nothing whatever about them, and nothing about him but that he could sometimes express judgments that were valueless. And even these are not what we most regret. To our own mind, the most painful parts of the present memoirs are the allusions to various unpretending people, now probably all dead, but any of whom may have left children to watch eagerly for any mention of their names, and who will find them here evoked from oblivion for a few words of scorn merely! Is anything gained by such references? We will undertake to say there is not one that could not have been wiped away with a mere stroke of the pen as a speck of dust from a picture, leaving Carlyle's work no more injured than the painter's. It is a strange mistake, but from a perusal of a good many biographies it seems to be not an uncommon one, to suppose that a disparaging mention is unimportant if it is also slight. The exact contrary is true. If you have to say much about any one, many things may be said, each of which standing alone would be very depreciatory, and yet leave the whole effect not ungracious. But if all you have to say is that he or she was in some way contemptible, you need surely a very imperative reason for mentioning him or her at all. A study of any human character is full of interest, and the light and shade must be taken together, but a mere allusion should be either kindly, or absolutely indispensable. As we think of the numerous references in this volume which are neither, we are tempted to rejoice, instead of lamenting, that such a judgment as that on

Lamb was permitted to see the light. If any one lays down the book wounded at some mention that revives the tender recollections of childhood to blot them with the ugliness of contempt, turning to this part of the volume he may dismiss the image with a smile rather than a sigh. If it is no more of a likeness than this of Lamb, he need not feel hurt by it. This is how the master-hand works, when the artist tries to paint without light. This is what we shall be in danger of—though happily not with the same power of giving pain—if we try to judge our brother without love.

A student of Carlyle's moral influence need not linger over the mistakes of his posthumous editor. Perhaps they may not do unmixed harm. We are not without hopes that one compensation for the pain caused by this book will be that all who take in hand to set forth their well-loved dead to the world will resolve, as they close these *Reminiscences*, that whatever severe judgments they may feel called on to express or record, no insignificant, obscure man or woman shall ever be stabbed by a mere word from the voice dear to them, that they will renounce the cheap pungency of ill-nature, and forget all that, from a higher level of existence, where truth and love are both more prized than here, the honoured dead would wish them to forget. And with this hope we turn from all that is to be regretted in the last writing of Carlyle, and revert to it only so far as it illustrates the views formed on utterances where we think the true man spoke more clearly.

His mind, it seems to us, may be compared to some lofty cathedral window through whose gem-like panes amethyst and sapphire are scattered whenever the sun's rays emerge, and which admits, on the dullest day, a certain sombre radiance. We look at it, not through it, and it does not occur to us to complain that the space might admit more light. Perhaps sometimes the colour is mistaken for light. We feel the difference when we try to put in few words the lesson our age has learnt from him. It was a lesson so closely associated with his striking individuality that the actual range of thought, perhaps, seems greater than it is, and the critic who translates it into his own



poor words may appear, even if he is a faithful translator, to bring it down to something very commonplace. Let us begin with what is the least difficult part of the task, and ask what was his place in the great genealogy of genius. Yet it is a hard matter even to define the spiritual neighbourhood of such a one as Thomas Carlyle. To trace his affinities with other men seems like fixing the place of a meteor in a constellation. We can recall no writer equally classical who is quite so peculiar, and the differences between such an intellect and any other will always appear to his admirers, and many who are not his admirers, greater than the resemblances. Among his contemporaries he had no relationship but those in which he was the superior, and for all the issues of keen debate among them he had no interest whatever. The great intellectual movement characteristic of our day—whether we name it the philosophy of Evolution, Darwinism, Positivism, or, taking it on its negative side, Agnosticism,—which makes physical science the keynote of human thought, was to him as though it were not. He did not join it, he did not oppose it, he simply ignored it. It came upon him, no doubt, when his day's work was done; and though it was a long evening through which he watched its development, yet the time for taking in new ideas was past, and we do not mention it as noteworthy that he had nothing to contribute to either side of a movement which began to be conspicuous after he was sixty. But without any definite advocacy of or opposition to a particular development of human thought, a man may have some relation to it, and the way has often been prepared for great ideas by those who did not consciously apprehend them. In reviewing his work, on the other hand, we feel that it afforded no point of junction whatever with that which is the dominant spirit in this year of grace 1881—he was no precursor of it, or of that which opposes it; it seems impossible to affiliate it with anything that strongly interested him in anyway. And though this is much less true of the great political than of the great philosophical movement of our day, for he certainly was the opponent of democracy, yet, if we come to ex-



amine all that was most characteristic in his sympathy and most permanent in his work, we shall be led to feel that it is altogether misleading to inquire whether the Radical or the Conservative of our day had most of his sympathies, or even (for that is the more natural way of putting it) most of his antagonism. We should probably always end by deciding that of these two parties the one he had spoken of last was that to whose principles he felt the deepest aversion. And till we take up a historical point of view, till we accept the past as a living reality, and return to that belief which had so strong a hold on him, and which he so often symbolised in the myth of the tree Ygdrasil,—the legendary symbol of the growth of Time, which he loved to oppose to all mechanical explanations of the universe,—the belief that the past lives in the present, we shall fail to apprehend any part of his message.

We shall understand it best, we believe, if we connect it with that recoil from the spirit of the eighteenth century which marked the dawn of its successor. His characteristic expression for that virtue which may be regarded as the seed of all excellence is *Veracity*. It is with a true discernment of the importance of association that he substituted the Latinised version of 'truthfulness' for the homelier word. Veracity, in his sense, is not truthfulness, does not even necessarily include it; at least, the thing he meant was compatible with many a deliberate falsehood. He meant the power and the will—it is not possible to separate the two things—to look behind the veils and curtains that drape realities, and to grasp the facts of life. Now, it was exactly this which the men of the eighteenth century abhorred. They regarded every attempt to penetrate behind formulas to principles with the dread—a dread surprisingly long-lived if we look at it with our associations of rapid change—of some return to 'the fanaticism of the last age.' The influence of the Puritan rebellion, throughout a large part of the eighteenth century, resembled the influence of the French revolution throughout the early part of this. The men of that time were like certain Irish peasants whom Carlyle somewhere

describes as moving warily across a sloping floor, the timbers of which were already giving way, and carefully clinging to the side of the walls, where they felt themselves least in danger. Or perhaps we may better describe them as the dwellers in some carelessly built house, who still trembled with the recollection of a recent fall, and in every movement had an eye to its possible repetition. They trod daintily, they shrank from admitting anything weighty, they insisted that all movements should be slow, and that as a matter of life and death all vehement action should be avoided. The Puritans had a firm standing-ground: they believed that God was the ruler of this earth, and called upon men to hear and do His will now as He had done to the Jews of old. The Jacobites had a firm standing-ground: they believed (such of them as were absolutely sincere) that God had appointed the rulers of this earth, and that He called upon men to submit to His delegates. But the true children of the eighteenth century did not thoroughly believe either of these things; they did not even believe that both contained a truth so much as that both contained a falsehood; and they felt, accordingly, that whatever theory was taken up as a working hypothesis of life must be stopped just short of either of these views. Thus they insisted that all thorough, logical acceptance of ideas in their extreme consequences,—all consistent pursuit of a true hypothesis of life throughout all practical issues,—in short, all thorough-going surrender to any belief whatever, should be set aside as enthusiasm. For their views, political and religious alike, were such as would not bear carrying out far in any direction whatever without landing them in a contradiction. We must not believe that God was ruling the world just as George I. was ruling England—that was a belief that led to enthusiasm and profanity; nobody could say what we should have to do if we believed that. But neither could we say that God had appointed George I. to reign over us; for there had been all kinds of trouble about the Protestant succession, and we had, in fact, appointed that for ourselves. The true way out of the difficulty would seem to be to deny that God had anything



whatever to do with the government of the world, but if words had to be taken literally, that was just what the Bible seemed to assert. Hence there arose everywhere a dread of everything ultimate, a sense that every line of thought would land the traveller on a contradiction if carried too far, a belief that wisdom consisted in the art of setting up impassable barriers and walling in the course of speculation within manageable limits. The revolution of 1688 was a virtual claim for a remodelling of our theory of Government; but the old phrases were to hold good, only they were not to be examined, not discussed—in short, not thoroughly believed. The whole course of speculation was adverse to the received theories of religion, but the average mind rejected neither the theories nor the new views which were to be fatal to them, but aimed at a certain illogical *modus vivendi* between the two. To the mind of that day there was no difficulty in believing the premisses and disbelieving the conclusion. Or it would be truer to say that neither premisses nor conclusion were entirely believed or disbelieved, but it was agreed that one could not be denied and the other need not be asserted.

If the spirit which we have here endeavoured to describe were confined to the eighteenth century, it would not be to the point to discuss it in referring to a person who was five years old when that century expired. But it is one to which Englishmen are strongly inclined at all times, and it does not seem extinct at the present day. How little we mean to speak scornfully of it will appear when we say that in some ways (not in all) we should be inclined to find its typical exhibition in, perhaps, the noblest Briton of the eighteenth century—Edmund Burke.<sup>1</sup> But whether we think it a good thing or whether we think it a bad thing, we must all agree that this is the spirit which Carlyle most hated. As we study it, we feel that this is the mould in which the molten lava took its shape. What is concave here is convex there; in follow-

<sup>1</sup> We would refer the reader, as an illustration of this view of Burke, to his elaborate attempt to dissociate the principles of 1688 from the principles of 1789. Nothing seems to us more an exhibition of what Carlyle meant by 'formulas.'

ing the lines of one surface, we have the reversed impression of the other. Much of what seems extravagance in Carlyle is explained when we look at it in this light. His obscurity disappears, his exaggerations are softened, and his originality emerges with new lustre, when we see him as a rebel against a dominant spirit of compromise. How exaggerated, for instance, seem his diatribes against Cant! In truth, the danger of our time lies in the very opposite direction from any insincere echo of other people's opinions, rather in a hasty and exaggerated expression of our own beliefs. But that is the feeling of a time completely revolutionised, a time when the reaction against the Revolution has died away, when its discoveries have become commonplaces, and all its theories are well worked into practical life, and taken for granted. Against this background, we shall never understand Thomas Carlyle. His antagonism to the age of compromise is commemorated, not only in his chief historic work, but in the whole bent of his moral sympathies and his intellectual taste. If we forget this, Carlyle will often appear to us like a student who trims his lamp when he might draw his curtain. His words were most eagerly read when a large part of their lesson was identified with the impulse of the hour, and we remember with difficulty that the two were once deadly foes.

His true affinities, therefore, seem to us with the men who were impelled by a common recoil from the spirit we have aimed at describing—the same impulse which, in political life, created a French Revolution. Of course a recoil will take the most various forms. A common starting-point does not mean a common goal; people may move in twenty different directions, all of them being influenced by the same wish to leave a particular spot far behind them. The ages, the nations, the literatures, the modes of thought that the eighteenth century had thought barbarous, became suddenly full of attraction; but the field was various, and the hunters would not have all recognised each other for brethren. But what Carlyle meant by *veracity* was the common aspiration of all the typical men of this time. We will try to make our mean-



ing clear by a comparison between him and two poets, for one of whom he never had any feeling (to judge from this posthumous notice) but an unintelligent contempt, and for the other of whom we should say he had a distinct repulsion. Yet it appears to us in both cases that his watchword was also theirs, though in a sense so different that perhaps neither he nor they would have recognised it. The poetic revolution effected by Wordsworth was that he broke down the barriers by which previously certain sections of life and phraseology had been fenced in, as appropriate subject-matter and dialect for poetry, and declared that its true material was life as it is, nature as it is. Others had done it before him, in fact, but he first carried out the reform consciously, systematically, didactically; he first reclaimed the waste that lay beyond these trim gardens, and showed that flowers bloomed here too. Is not this a translation into the region of poetry of what Carlyle preached in the world of morality? Respect Nature, respect the facts of everyday life—this is the Wordsworthian lesson; and the message of Carlyle—more emphatic, less simple, more elaborate—seems to us not essentially different. And that the two men were probably too different to be able to understand each other (these *Reminiscences* prove that at all events the incapacity existed on one side), only makes their common truth the more conspicuous. Wordsworth joined that reaction which Carlyle hated; but he and Carlyle were spiritual brethren, though they knew it not.

Again, to turn to one whom Carlyle, at least, recognised as a force to be taken account of: his repulsion to Byronism, we believe, expresses, in part, that feeling with which we all turn from a caricature of ourselves. Byron's is the defiance hurled by a wild, nature-loving spirit against the decorum of a smug, heartless respectability; he is full of the turbid exaggeration with which passionate, self-asserting sincerity strives to brand and crush the hypocrisy to which, in truth, it thereby supplies an antiseptic. It seems to us that some such words may be used also to describe an important part of the ideal that Carlyle regarded with most sympathy. The pirate—

‘Who knew himself a villain, but who deemed  
The rest no better than the thing he seemed,  
And scorned the rest as hypocrites who hid  
Those deeds the bolder spirit plainly did’—

has much in common with the Carlylean hero. The Corsair flinging aside his disguise in the Pacha's hall is a sort of type of that spirit which Carlyle sympathised with, on its worst side, no doubt; but on a side which had a powerful hold in him. For remember, it is the Pacha, not the Corsair, who is the true robber; the Corsair is the true commander, the true ruler of men: his lightning-stroke destroys that which has only assumed to itself untruly the aspect of justice, and the support of a befooled and duped society. And what Carlyle scorned in Byron was the casting of ‘pearls before swine’; the alliance of the spirit that he regarded so sympathetically with the spirit against which all the scorn of his nature was most powerfully stirred—the weak self-indulgence, the moral cowardice, the pampered spirit which marks all the dangers of an aristocracy. To the modern spirit, at its best, this temptation is always despicable; to Carlyle, in whose veins ran the blood of the Scottish Lowlands, who would speak with pride of his own father's careful work, and who always felt loftiness of position a claim for arduous effort, it was peculiarly despicable. His loathing for the life of the idle aristocrat is expressed in *Sartor Resartus* indeed, with a repulsive distinctness which seems to us the only blot on the most characteristic of his works. And this entanglement of the Byronic ideal with so much that is false and poor, seems to hide from him what it shared with his own,—the refusal to accept any belief that could not be fully acknowledged, the protest against limits traced by a timid and artificial age, and the claim for man's whole being of at least a full and fearless recognition. It is with those who joined in this protest that we would class Thomas Carlyle, though he was so much the junior of any of them, and though there were none of them whom he seems to have adequately appreciated. He was a deeper nature than any, and where he takes up their protest it is as if a violoncello should repeat



the melody of a flute. But the air, we believe, is the same.

To say that the influence of a great man must be explained by a review of the past, is, if he has died in extreme old age, almost the same as saying that its later aspects are misleading. In truth, the moral influence which we have tried to indicate, appears to us to have ceased long before even the close of Carlyle's literary career. Roughly speaking, we should say that it waned rapidly after what he calls 'the disastrous and humiliating year, 1848.' Of course we are not speaking of his popularity, which was at its height, we learn from himself, when he went to Edinburgh to address the students of the University as their Rector in 1866; nor are we speaking of his literary activity, the visible record of which is almost as great, judged by mere bulk, since that time as before it. We mean that after 1848 his writings became a part of mere literature. *The French Revolution*, the *Essays*, above all *Sartor Resartus*, are a part of literature, but they are also something more. They form a channel of moral influence, in the same way that the speeches of Mr. Gladstone or the sermons of Dr. Newman form such a channel. They are impassioned appeals to the moral nature of man; they stirred the whole being; they were *dynamic* writings. Of the literary work of his later years this cannot be said. It is an indispensable study for any one who wishes to understand the eighteenth century, and that is all. It does not, therefore, come within the scope of an essay which deals with this deeper influence; and in what follows we shall touch on it lightly, or not at all.

We must revive old recollections if we would describe that deeper influence. But the old recollections are among the most vivid in memory's store. The first moment that his spell was felt is remembered as the first sight of the Alps or the sea. No doubt it is easier to say what that influence was not than what it was. It was not that of an instructor, enlarging the field of intellectual vision and bringing new facts to the storehouse of thought; nor yet that of a critic, supplying new logical machinery for the

working up of these facts into theories; it was a power which told not alone on the intellect but the whole nature, and did not so much present new material to thought, as new life to thought itself. Carlyle appears to us the great witness to the permanent inspiration of humanity. He belonged to a race powerfully influenced by the idea of a partial inspiration, and felt a sympathy with this belief curiously strong for one who did not share it. He was thus educated to appreciate the effect of an actual conviction, as compared with a mere undisputed hypothesis; he discerned a force in the lives of those who lived under the sense of a Divine mission, which it seemed to him was the actual condition of all true work. He made us feel—for who that had not felt his power would venture to try to describe it?—that

‘Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen,  
Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist todt.’

He showed us that the influx of Divine power was no privilege of a peculiar race or a particular age, but the very atmosphere of all vigorous life whatever, national or individual. As Wordsworth had vindicated man’s homely unheroic life for poetry, discerning the ideal element in old beggars, and village schoolmasters, and leech-gatherers, and all sorts of prosaic people, as they would have been thought; so Carlyle brought that which is to the soul what poetry is to the intellect into common everyday life; he saw a Revelation of God not in one age or book, but in all. Conventional opinion had made distinctions between one part of history and life and another, which were as unreal as a classification which would refuse to allow our earth a place in the same category with Mercury and Venus. But we too inhabit a star: our world is a member of the heavens, and shares their brightness, if it be regarded from the right point of view. In his own words—

‘May we not say that the hour of spiritual enfranchisement is even this? When your ideal world, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed and thrown open; and you discover



with amazement enough, like the Lothario in *Wilhelm Meister*, "America is here or nowhere." The situation that has not its duty, its ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy ideal: work it out thyself, and working, believe, live, be free.'<sup>1</sup>

Two opposite convictions lay involved in this teaching—opposite, yet, perhaps, in reality, only the active and passive side of the same belief—in which, if they penetrated the whole being, lies man's true redemption. One is a sense of the sacredness of work which, though every true worker, even in the humblest sphere, must have felt it, was never, till the time of Carlyle, admitted to any adequate expression in literature. Carlyle is the first poetic thinker who has raised industry to that position from which, at first, the associations with slavery belonging to a classical ideal, and afterwards the associations with poverty belonging to an aristocratic ideal, had apparently excluded it; and this outer or social part of his influence we believe to be commemorated in the unquestionably changed ideal of our higher classes. Doubtless the most universal of all human temptations, as indolence is, will generally be victorious, when it has any ally in circumstance, with every generation. But no one can say that in our time this is the ideal of the high-born and the well-endowed. It has become the social creed of the upper classes that they must in some way justify their position, they must and they may do many things that were out of the question when Carlyle was young, or even middle-aged. A breath of manly life has passed over the world, and if the Honourable Felicissimus Zero is still to be found in fashionable life, at least we could not make him our type of the parliamentary leader. This new spirit has taken odd forms, no doubt; but on the whole it has been the parent of many useful and manly aspirations among a generation of Englishmen, and has, through them, coloured all English life, and we cannot doubt that in a great measure it is due to the influence of Thomas Carlyle.

<sup>1</sup> *Sartor Resartus* (Everlasting Yea).

This we would call the outward result of his lesson, and we think it obvious. The inward result cannot, in the nature of things, be in like manner unquestionable, but it seems to us equally real. His words had a peculiar influence in bringing this fundamental belief to lull the tossing of egotistic unrest, and appease the clamour of a mere personal demand for happiness with the sense of a mission in the humblest fate. Strange that one who so worshipped force should have had so mighty an influence in clothing the idea of resignation with some attractive power that changed it, for some minds, from a word to a thing! Yet, perhaps, not altogether strange. Perhaps a manly submission to the force that is felt divine is the first condition of successful work. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you,' was a paradox that Carlyle heartily accepted. A surrender to that Divine Voice was submission and effort in one.

How slight a variation in the statement of truth opens the door to error! The belief in the inspiration of humanity is the strength of Carlyle's creed. The belief in inspired men is its weakness. As a belief in the inspiration of the Bible has been often a disbelief in the worth of any other literature, so his sense of the dignity of the hero and the prophet became in its distortion a scorn for average humanity which is the most blinding medium through which we can contemplate our fellows, and which it is deplorable to remember his editor has forced on our attention in these last words from his pen. It cannot be denied that his personal character bore some traces of this scorn; he was sometimes overbearing, a fault which we think the world condones too readily in great men, and which we cannot, therefore, pass over quite without notice. But beneath the scorn lay a deep and tender reverence, not alone for those who claimed it in right of the massiveness and force of their character, but for many whom one would have expected him to despise. And the reverence, we think, was a deeper thing than the scorn. But it was less obvious. His scorn, indeed, derived nourishment even from his withered faith. It reminds us of the fine saying of Nathan der Weise—



‘Der Aberglaub’ in dem wir aufgewachsen  
Verliert, wenn wir ihn auch erkennen, darum  
Doch seine Macht nicht über uns.’

We have no right, indeed, to say that Carlyle grew up in any superstition. These volumes prove it to have been a pure and holy faith. Nevertheless, in speaking of a large part of his creed, an adverse critic might borrow Professor Huxley's epigram on Comteism, and describe it as Calvinism without Christianity. He was intensely a Calvinist. If all beyond this world were dim, at least in this world the division of the elect and the reprobate was a mighty reality. It was his indictment against our modern society that we had broken away from this creed, and refused to recognise a division which was as fundamental as any in science. ‘Yes, my friends, scoundrel is scoundrel: that remains for ever a fact; and there exists not on the earth whitewash that can make the scoundrel a friend of this universe. He remains an enemy, if you spent your life whitewashing him.’<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's virulence against the friends of the negro seems to us a curious symbol of this political Manichæanism (to go back to the purest form of Calvinism); it was as if the black skin had become an actual type of the black nature on which modern philanthropy wasted its purifying efforts. He seemed to feel sometimes as if men were divided into black races and white races in order to express in an outward and visible form the inward distinction which our stupidity was constantly confusing.

There was not much interest in this rather childish piece of symbolism, nor have we ever heard any friend of Carlyle's speak of these pro-slavery harangues with any feeling but weariness and regret. But there is another aspect in which much that was harsh in his political views seems illustrated by Calvinism. The Calvinist idea of virtue is adherence to divine law; that law itself, therefore, must be something deeper than virtue. If goodness consists in obedience to the will of God, we cannot say that God Himself is good; there is no superior will in conformity to which we may trace goodness in Him. And

<sup>1</sup> *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (Model Prisons).

the great Reformers did not shrink from this audacity of logic. Luther, who in this respect was as Calvinistic as Calvin, answered Erasmus boldly, when he reproached him with ascribing to God conduct which would be hateful to man, that this was just what he had a full right to do. For man to decide that fellow-man, for no fault of his, should be doomed to frightful punishment, was an offence against the law of God. But God was not bound by His own laws, and He might thus deal with the creatures who, as mere results of His own power, could claim absolutely nothing at His hands. We must not endeavour to find in His dealings with us that material for *approbation* which was inseparable from all merely human reverence. This elevation of power above morality was never, we think, put forward in all its naked repulsiveness after the Reformation; when later Calvinists tried to justify their scheme, they took refuge in the *incomprehensibility* of God's dealings, and always seemed to be ready to fall back on the belief that our moral sense might be fully satisfied with the 'scheme of redemption' if our intellectual powers were sufficiently enlarged to take it in. It seems to us that though Carlyle was never, in a religious sense, a Calvinist, yet his strong sympathy with the traditional creed of his country left its influence on his political creed in the distinct form which had been impressed upon it by the more robust logic of the earlier thinkers. Enthroned above all that man can discern of the laws that guide his fate sits an awful Power, of whom Carlyle less and less spoke in any language that denoted personality, but for whom he never ceased to claim an absolute, unfaltering submission, in a sense which no thinker could claim submission for a mere *thing*. And though he often used language that implied justice in the Divine Ruler, yet often also—and more and more—he seems to have felt, as the Calvinists did, as if God were rather the fountain of justice than just. The impression left by his allusions seems to be that all we *can* know of God is power. And if the rulers of men were powerful, it was because they were at one with the designs of the Ruler of man. Thus his worship of Force was in fact always a part of his worship of God. His



reverence for power—even when it took such forms, for instance, as that glorification of Frederick William of Prussia which seems to us the most repulsive thing he ever wrote—should never be regarded apart from his profound sense that all strength was divine, that there was no power which was not an actual participation of nature with the will that ruled the world, and in submission to which lay our highest duty.

How far this worship of force has influenced those who have learned from Carlyle we have much doubt. It has certainly had some direct influence, important as far as it goes. On the whole, however, it appears to us that Carlyle's sympathy with tyranny has actually been an influence on the side of democracy; for people naturally suppose that when a wise man is driven to violence and extravagance in his advocacy, he is advocating a bad cause. And then, too, it must be remembered that he was, in spite of his peasant birth, in sympathies an aristocrat. His hatred towards an indolent and luxurious aristocracy is the hatred of an aspiring nature for those who deface a fine ideal, and his sympathy with such a peasant nature as his own father is the sympathy with which we regard those who provide a fitting background for such an ideal. The true test of aristocratic feeling, in the exclusive, negative sense, is the feeling with which a man regards not the peasantry, but the *bourgeoisie*. On this side we think both Carlyle, and those who learnt much from Carlyle, were apt to exhibit the weakness of aristocracy; some touches of this we imagine ourselves to discern in the posthumous volumes. It should be borne in mind that the *bourgeoisie*, the class that was least to his taste—to which he had no ties whatever—was at his best time the dominant political body. His contempt and dislike for 'respectability,' 'gigmanity,' and the like, would take a different aspect in our day. From 1832 to 1867 the dangers of 'gigmanity' were the dangers of England—its prejudices, its stupidity shackled public life; it was, in fact, the governor. The cause of popular government was associated with the class most remote from his sympathies. It would never have much sympathy from him; but we think the recoil

might, in other circumstances, have been less contemptuous.

But however we explain it, we must allow that Carlyle's influence in favour of that which is true in Conservatism, has not been so large as we should have hoped. For we cannot imagine any teacher more valuable to our generation than one who should point out clearly and emphatically the dangers of Democracy; and it seems to us that here was a man of genius who did so point them out, and that this part of his lesson has been vain. And this failure is the more striking, because the political world has been so much governed, even to this very hour [1881], by men who were not very greatly Carlyle's juniors. It is not as if a new generation had arisen who knew not Carlyle; it is the old who have gone over to the enemy. We suppose that the current towards Democracy in our day has been too strong for the strongest swimmer to resist. And in all our disappointment at feeling that the prophet has here spoken truly, and spoken in vain, we may console ourselves with the belief that no words are wholly wasted which teach that hard-learnt lesson—that the union of truth with scorn is sterile.

Perhaps we may see the truth in Carlyle's protest against Democracy more clearly if we approach it from a side on which he himself never opened it. No great man who ever lived had less sympathy with Liberty, in the modern sense, than he had. But do we not too much forget, at times, that it has had any but the modern sense? It is strange that a word of which the most brilliant associations are classical should be invariably used in a sense that a Greek or Roman would have had much difficulty in understanding. It is not that he would have disagreed with an Englishman or an American; he would never have been able to see exactly what he meant. Liberty, to the citizen of classic antiquity, meant dominion. To be free was to have a share in government. Freedom as much implied servitude as the convex implies the concave. Much of what is most wild, most offensive in Carlyle's utterance becomes intelligible when we regard it as a protest against the substitution of the modern ideal of



liberty for the ancient. We do not mean that he strove to resuscitate a Roman ideal of liberty; his sympathies were all with the romantic, not the classic past, and for anything of the nature of a revival he would have felt a strong distaste. But for that in the modern ideal of Liberty which is contrasted with the ancient (that which we may roughly indicate by describing the ruler as a mere policeman)—this he hated just as Plato would have hated it. Listen, for instance, to this voice from the first volume which comes within what we would call his period of protest:—<sup>1</sup>

‘I do not suppose any reader of mine, or many persons in England at all, have much faith in fraternity, equality, and the revolutionary millenniums preached by the French prophets in this age; but there are many movements here, too, which tend inevitably in the like direction; and good men who would stand aghast at Red Republic and its adjuncts seem to me travelling at full speed towards that or a similar goal! Certainly the notion everywhere prevails among us too, and preaches itself abroad in every dialect, uncontradicted anywhere as far as I can hear, that the grand panacea for social woes is what we call “enfranchisement,” “emancipation,” or, translated into practical language, the cutting asunder of all human relations, whenever they are found grievous. . . . Let us all be “free” of one another; we shall then be happy—free, without bond or connection except that of cash payment, fair day’s wages for the fair day’s work, bargained for by voluntary contract and law of supply and demand—this is thought to be the true solution of all difficulties and injustices that have occurred between man and man. To rectify the relation that exists between two men is there no method, then, but that of ending it? The old relation has become unsuitable, obsolete, perhaps unjust; it imperatively requires to be amended, and the remedy is, abolish it—let there be henceforth no relation at all. From the “Sacrament of Marriage” downwards, human beings used to be manifoldly related one to another, and each to all; and there was no relation among human beings, just or unjust, that had not its grievances and its difficulties, its necessities on both sides to bear and forbear. But henceforth,

<sup>1</sup> *Latter-Day Pamphlets.*

be it known, we have changed all that by favour of heaven : “ the voluntary principle ” has come up, which will itself do the business for us ; and now let a new Sacrament, that of *Divorce*, which we call emancipation, and spout of on our platforms, be universally the order of the day. . . . Cut every human relation which has anywhere grown uneasy sheer asunder, reduce whatever was compulsory to voluntary, whatsoever was permanent in us to the condition of nomadic :—in other words, loosen by assiduous wedges in every joint the whole fabric of social existence, stone from stone, till at last, all now being loose enough, it can, as we already see in most countries, be overset by sudden bursts of revolutionary rage, and lying as mere mountains of anarchic rubbish, solicit you to sing Fraternity, etc., over it, and to rejoice at the new remarkable era of human progress we have arrived at.’

In those words you have, we believe, the feelings, however differently they would have been expressed, with which those of the ancients who most admired liberty would have contemplated our modern society. To make man free by annihilating, in the eye of the law, almost all relation except that which is the result of a bargain, would have seemed to them like making a solitude and calling it peace. Society, in the ancient ideal, was a highly organic thing, consisting of groups, the members of which were connected by a most elaborate system of relation, so that the state was repeated in every family, and the graduated system of civil right, which buttressed Roman power, was reflected in every household. Society, in the modern ideal, is a collection of individuals. It is idle to wish to undo the work of two thousand years, and the volume from which our quotation is taken is little more than a lament over the process by which this change has been brought about. Still, while we lament that a great man should have given his support to tyranny, it is well to remember that in this protest Carlyle would have had on his side the wisest men of that era of the world which, from its pre-eminence as a school of thought and of expression, we are wont to speak of as classical. Are we not, perhaps, too ready to imagine that neither he nor they had anything to say for their belief? For our own



part, what we most lament in that monotonous vehemence is that we believe it deafened its hearers to the element in it that was true.

Human character is a many-sided thing, and every true description of a human being must be full of apparent contradictions. We do not think Carlyle was especially so; his inconsistencies were all lighted up by genius, but he was about as consistent as most people. And yet we have to say of this fierce hater of democracy that he was its prophet and singer. He, who had no sympathy with liberty, has bequeathed us, as his most characteristic work, what may be called a sort of imperfect trilogy (the first part being wanting) of the great drama of the modern Revolution, of which Liberty became the watchword. Even in the very expression, of his sympathy, however, we discern its sharp limitation. The two periods lit up by the flash—the Puritan uprising in the middle of the seventeenth century, and the still greater Revolution which closed the eighteenth—are both succeeded by sudden dimness. When Whiggism replaced Puritanism he could only sneer at ‘the beautiful Revolution of ‘eighty-eight’ which steps over the bodies of dead heroes filling the trench ‘in official pumps and silk stockings and universal three times three.’<sup>1</sup> A civil-spoken, lawyer-like, decorous Revolution, especially when it stood so near the real thing, and seemed to pretend to some inheritance of its fame, was an abomination to him! And then, again, when Whiggism takes up the message of the Revolution he turns away in disgust. Let us borrow an illustrative touch from these *Reminiscences*. ‘You are so terribly in earnest,’ said Jeffrey to him after one of their battles. There spoke the eighteenth century to its successor and its predecessor alike! Carlyle embodied what was common to both, but his deepest sympathies were given (against the grain, we believe, of his intellectual convictions) to Puritanism: and we cannot but regret that it is the Puritan revolution which he has set before us in the least finished and literary form. There is something very remarkable in his sympathy with the faith that inspired

<sup>1</sup> *Heroes and Hero-Worship*.

it. The whole spring of its energy was to be found in beliefs that he did not share—that is to say, that he thought untrue. And yet he always seems to feel that the Puritans were stronger men than their descendants simply in virtue of their belief. It has always been a marvel to us how he contrived to dismiss, as something insignificant, the enormous differences between his creed and theirs, and we can never quite get over a sense of infidelity to his own idea of veracity in this *belief in the power of belief* apart from its truth. Something of this feeling seems to us to come out in the way he comments on such a notice, for instance, as that Cromwell appointed a day of humiliation and prayer. ‘If modern readers suppose these paragraphs to be cant, it will turn out an entire mistake. I advise all modern readers not only to believe that Cromwell here means what he says, but,’ etc. etc. It is almost as if he wanted to assure himself that belief then was real. Were, then, these tremendous transactions in which the Puritans believed, just as he believed that Charles I. was put to death,—were they matters of so little moment, that the words which seemed to assert them might be used as a mere circumlocution for the belief that an awful Power lay beyond our scrutiny, but was manifest to us in His judgments upon us? Nothing that Carlyle despised as a ‘formula’ seems to us more unreal than this. Yet this is what he seems to have felt. The Puritans did not believe in the eternities and the immensities; they believed in God and Christ. They would not have said the difference between their creed and Carlyle’s was insignificant; they would never have said, like Margaret to Faust:

‘Das ist alles recht schön und gut  
Ungefähr sagt das der Pfarrer auch  
Nur mit ein bischen andern Worten.’

And Carlyle, if he had justified himself in those words of Faust which we suppose contain his creed—

‘Wer darf ihn nennen?  
Und wer bekennen  
Ich glaub ihn?’



Wer empfinden  
Und sich unterwinden  
Zu sagen, ich glaub' ihn nicht?  
Ich habe keinen Namen  
Dafür! Gefühl ist alles  
Name ist Schall und Rauch'—

was pronouncing the most distinct condemnation against those who dared name the Unnameable, and accept very definite propositions about it. And herein the two halves of his nature seem to us not in harmony.

There are two interesting passages in these *Reminiscences* where, in referring to the faith of his parents, he drops a few words which throw a great light on his relation to Puritanism. The first seems to us so typical of his attitude towards the past, that we could imagine having it explained away as an allegory, if the circumstances admitted of it:

'It was 10 P.M. of a still and fine night when I arrived at my father's door hearing him make worship, and stood meditatively, gratefully, lovingly, till he had ended: thinking to myself how good and innocently beautiful and peaceful on the earth is all this: and it was the last time I was ever to hear it. I must have been there twice or oftener' (after that), 'but the sound of his pious psalm and prayer I never heard again. With a noble politeness, very noble when I consider, they kept all that in a fine kind of remoteness from us, knowing and somehow forgiving us completely that we did not think of it quite as they' (ii. 160).

And then, in a still more touching outburst of filial recollection, after speaking of a time of great misery on his part:

'Unwearied kindness was always mine from my incomparable mother. I did at last contrive, by judicious endeavour, to speak piously and *agreeably* to one so pious without unverity. Nay, it was a kind of interesting exercise to wind softly out of those anxious affectionate cavils of her dear heart, and get real sympathy, real assent under borrowed forms. Oh, her patience with me! Oh, her never-tiring love!' (i. 181).

That picture of his reverently listening to his father's prayer outside the closed door seems to us a type of his

whole attitude towards Christianity. It was a very strong sympathy, rooted in the deepest part of his nature; yet it appears to us that the line which divides that kind of sympathy from what he called *unveracity* is an exceedingly subtle and faint one. At another moment, and when the narrow faith was not associated with his reverence and love, he might have spoken scornfully of this pathetic craving for 'real sympathy under borrowed forms.' For think a moment of the dissent which Carlyle must have been contented to ignore in these touching theological conversations with his mother! We doubt not that in his parents' simple creed were articles that they would have died rather than deny, and he would have died rather than assert. Yet the sense of harmony between them was a deeper thing than the sense of divergence. Love was the interpreter here, and doubtless that love interpreted their faith to him always, by whomsoever it was held. It showed him their faith as the root of noble lives and vindicated his own deep conviction that a noble life must be always rooted in the truth. And in the case of historic Puritanism a less valuable element came in. His sympathies were always given to faith in its militant form; the love of a truth always expressed itself most naturally as a hatred against the opposite falsehood, and this also is the Puritan spirit. It is Puritanism as a revolt against Sacerdotalism that engages his energetic sympathy. Sacerdotalism he hated with more thoroughness even than he loved Puritanism. Puritanism was true in a certain sense, but Sacerdotalism was false in every sense. He could not even believe that any one believed it. It seemed to him, we fancy, a sort of spiritual flunkeyism: his protest against it was a refusal to be shown into the Divine Presence by liveried menials, a claim to meet his God alone. When the dear associations of the revered past, and the protest of a vehement, rugged independence join in one impulse, no wonder that impulse should be strong enough to bear down all merely logical barriers. But we think his *picture* of Puritanism would have been a truer thing had he recognised how high these logical barriers were.



While on the one hand we feel Carlyle not always entirely loyal to his own ideal of veracity, on the other we owe him no unmixed gratitude for that ideal itself. A large part of the effect of this on general morality (if indeed we must trace to his influence the raw unreserve which characterises so much of the thought of our day) seems to us not gain, but the reverse. And though we are not sure that the two things, as a matter of fact, have much to do with one another, we still feel that the certain danger of making truth an aim is to conceal the duty of reserve. There were personal characteristics in him which lessened the danger,—his own natural dignity, his reticence, his massiveness of nature,—but we by no means think he escaped it, either as a man or a writer. As a writer, indeed, the richness and the peculiarity of his style are so much connected with the unchecked utterance of a unique individuality, and the occasional touches of Swift, which illustrate the danger of giving utterance to all one thinks, are so rare, that on the whole, perhaps, that might be passed over. But as a man (though not, of course, in this direction) the danger was much oftener evident. His temptation was not to anything we usually associate with the name of unreserve, but the rough, needless plainness of speech, and occasional utter disregard of other people's feelings—sometimes, we believe, bitterly regretted by him, but often repeated—form, to our mind, a telling exhibition of the danger of changing a negative to a positive duty. Every one should beware of the *impulse* towards veracity. The love of truth does not show itself as anything rapid or impressive. It is modest, temperate, it is averse to all vehemence, it dies with the touch of exaggeration. Perhaps it is the rarest of all virtues. Every kind of predilection is mistaken for it—the taste for rhetoric, the taste for logic, party spirit, and above all that sense of the value of a particular truth which has no more connection with it than the sense of the value of a particular medicine has. Most of these things are harmless, some of them are good, but none of them are the love of truth. And indeed the love of truth itself seems to us a wrong expression; we would rather name the virtue thus indicated a dread of

falsehood. It is our duty never to let our words or deeds suggest what is false; but it is only the duty of particular persons in particular circumstances to make them suggest what is true. The duty of truth means the duty of avoiding falsehood; in no other sense is it a duty. It is poor work putting all our crude, rough, hasty judgments into words, and calling that a love of truth. The virtue which Carlyle admired in what he called veracity, as far as it admits of paraphrase in a single word, was, we think, courage; but danger and courage vanish together. There is nothing now, in ordinary circumstances, that needs so little courage as speaking the truth, unless the truth be merely personal. It is an evil thing to add to that impulse which most of us feel to give our nature its full swing, and which, in every one who feels it at all, is quite strong enough, any sense of self-laudation for not being afraid to speak our minds. Is it to further the truth to  *speak*  our minds? 'The society in which the greatest amount of falsehood should be uttered,' it was once said by a wise man, 'is the society in which each member should make it his object to utter the whole truth that is in him.' It would be a strange irony if Carlyle had done anything to help on this state of things! It would have seemed to him a stupid misunderstanding to suppose that there is any antagonism between the praise of silence and the praise of truth. But we believe that experience would prove the hostility a real one; we are sure that, in actual life, no one will always suppose that truth is a duty, and always remember that reticence is so likewise.

Carlyle was faithful to his own ideal, at all events, in the career which he chose for his activity. He combines the historic spirit of our age with a poetic fervour that belongs to our fathers. So powerful a dramatic genius, we believe, never before chose history for its field. Dramatic power is discoverable in many a chronicler of the past, from Herodotus downwards; but dramatic power as it is shown in the works of Carlyle has hitherto been exhibited only in the field of poetry or of fiction. In some ways, indeed, we might compare him rather to the actor than the author of the piece. He studies a character as an



actor gets up his part, throwing himself into his hero's position, adopting his sympathies, apologising for his temptations, and prepared throughout the whole of his career to make common cause with him. Nor is it merely in vividness of character-painting that his power is shown; the outward representation is equally vivid. His description constantly embodies some hint of costume, of adventurous accessories, such as almost suggests the stage. King John appears on the scene 'in a suit of cramoisy velvet with a superabundance of plumage and fringing, and sort of a blackguard quality air'; or the etymology of Hohenzollern is illustrated by a little vignette of the High Toll, where travelling merchants unload their mules and unstrap their wares at the lofty castle gate. We are never without some hint of scenery for his narrative. It is to the same characteristic, we fancy, that we owe the odd little devices of his style, his constant extracts from an 'unpublished work not sure of ever getting published,' and his other forms of recourse to that self-quotation, the object of which we fail quite to understand, but in which we can fancy that he found a sort of stage where he might partly recognise and confess the nature of his own sympathies, and make himself a personage in his own drama. Yet the driest of compilers hardly exceeds him in accuracy; at all events in an apparently unceasing search for it. So far as we know, no important statement made by him has ever been questioned (of course we do not mean the general effect of his statements),—surely a remarkable fact when we consider the scale of some of his narrations, and the quantity of books consulted by him at which he must have been satisfied by a mere glance. He will even pause to mention that something happened on Monday instead of Tuesday, as his authority has mistakenly reported; and these little asides to the reader are so full of his own individuality, that there seems a certain racy flavour even in the correction of an insignificant date—a carrier who dies in January, for instance, and, owing to his biographer forgetting the 'old style,' proceeds to forward parcels in July, fixes old New Year's Day in our memories with the flavour of

epigram. The picture, at once so richly coloured and so definite, claims a degree of confidence which perhaps it does not entirely deserve. Because he enables us to remember what he tells us about a character, we suppose that he justifies us in believing it; but the vigorous dramatist is not, in the nature of things, an absolutely trustworthy guide through the tangled labyrinth of human motives. Truth, it is often said, is stranger than fiction. But it is not so dramatic. In the best of men and in the worst of men there are strange inconsistencies, which spoil them both for effective presentation before the eyes of men with that completeness which satisfies the dramatic sense. We have heard that Macaulay refused to look at papers which proved William III. to have been responsible for the Massacre of Glencoe. He could not bear to recast the part of his hero. Carlyle would have read every word, extracted what was telling, illustrated it with all sorts of genealogy and geography, and then flaunted the evidence in our faces as proofs that massacre was part of an heroic ideal. But even where his sympathies are misleading their truth exceeds their error. The man or the period they exhibit is lighted up by a blaze of light, in which, as distinguished from the surrounding darkness, we can make out but little gradation. Within that charmed circle every outline is indeed sharp and definite, but light and shade hardly exist. Still such flashes are most revealing; they at least reveal to us that the men of the past were of our own flesh and blood—no pale images on faded tapestry, but warm, living human beings, full of love and hatred, of hope and fear, of passionate desire and passionate aversion. It is not a small debt to owe to any one that he had made the Past real to us. Much even of the moral distortion which we occasionally find in Carlyle's histories may be forgiven to him who forces us to believe that the Past *was* present. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the gain which it would be to men to believe in History—to realise that legend of the tree Ygdrasil where the Past is a root of the Present. How impossible would all baseness seem if we could realise that we must bequeath our deeds to our children! The permanence of



national life is the one great lesson in the forgetfulness of which all national crime seems to have originated, and no historian has ever preached this as Carlyle has done.

We believe that this testimony is even a larger one than it sounds. In that sense of a Divine plan for which he honoured the Puritans, and for which we can fancy he turned back to them when his own sense of it was faint and dim, lies the great idea of history, which may be translated into many dialects and used by those who deny that an aim implies a mind, but apart from which, we are certain, history would become a dreary and meaningless imbroglio. Carlyle was too much of a Calvinist to see it in its truest form, as a Divine education. But as a sort of 'apostolic succession'—a spiritual genealogy of inspired men, and therefore born rulers of men—he felt it, and preached it as only, we believe, by the Hebrew prophets it has been preached before. It seems strange to say this of one whom we should describe (though the description would have been repudiated by himself with much energy) as the last of the sceptics. We have almost forgotten what doubt means. Carlyle saw the difficulties in the way of Faith, but he felt that man must act not upon what he fails to see, but upon what he sees. The darkness seemed to him to be ignored, the light to be used. What he saw, he saw clearly. When the twilight came down he spoke doubtfully; when the night he was silent. A sense of Divine power was one of his strongest convictions; his feeling as to the source of that power was dim and vague. At times he spoke as if it was something which man could only recognise as a current of irresistible impulse, as if he could never rise to its source and find there a loving will; and this seems to have been more and more his feeling as the years went on. In the narrative of the mysterious stranger who brings the hero of his philosophical romance to his foster-parents, we sometimes imagine a sort of parable of man's destiny on earth—the mystery which surrounds his origin being shown as one no living voice will ever dispel. But leaving the region of doubt, the world of humanity exhibited this divine in-

fluence in the clear daylight of certainty. There must be a divine influence, for there were inspired men. There was an unseen Ruler of men to whom men were accountable; there were inflexible laws which expressed the decision of a First Will—it lay too far beyond our ken to be expressed in any word we could use; but, however our words might fail in expressing it, it was something above, not within, Nature, and more, not less, than man. There was a claim for allegiance, and there must therefore be some object for allegiance, though man's conceptions might be too dim to express it in any form that was free from error, and the purest faith that had been exhibited on this earth might therefore be full of delusion. He seems to us to have believed at once more and less than any other man who ever strongly swayed our race. No one who gave so much fervour to Faith ever gave it so little form. He believed in a righteous ruler of the world that man inhabits, and he believed in a universal Spirit breathing through the Cosmos, and the Pantheism strangely coloured the inherited Puritanism without altogether blending with it.

This belief in the inspiration of humanity could not, as he preached it, have been preached at the present day, nor, we think, at an earlier day. At an earlier day he must have spent so much energy in vindicating for himself the right to claim for secular human beings a divine mission, that his message would have been emphasised differently, and with him emphasis was everything. He would have had to defend himself against the charge of 'enthusiasm,' and whatever form the defence took it would have made the message a different thing. And then, in our own day (for we have recorded our conviction that all that is valuable in that message belongs to the past), he would have had to overcome the very opposite danger. He would have had to consider how his lesson would have sounded in the ears of those who would turn all his vagueness to negation, and understand his eternities and destinies as something quite different from what he meant by the words. He appears on a narrow isthmus between the age of criticism and the age of denial; he must have been different from the man he was had he belonged to either.



He belonged to the age of doubt. But in a time which confuses doubt with denial, it is hard to recognise the doubt of one whose sympathies are all with faith.

The canon of judgment, in endeavouring to appreciate a great man, lies in disentangling his assertions from his negations. The last will always appear the most distinct, no doubt, but let us beware of confusing distinctness and truth. When we speak of his creed as *political Calvinism*, we describe in it that which, if we believe in a divine education of humanity, we must pronounce false. When we speak of it as a belief in *the inspiration of humanity*, we design that which has been felt by many a spring of unmixed strength, an upward beckoning that seemed at once to guide and to invigorate, a sudden light that flashed on the dark places of life, and bore the test of later gropings when the flash was past. Let it not be said we cut ourselves off from declaring Carlyle's creed to be true on its positive side, if we begin by declaring it false on its negative. Before we apply these logical tests to any belief we should consider how far the human intellect is capable of converting propositions so vast as those which define the basis of a creed. No source of error is commoner than the fallacy of antithesis. We cannot say that the effect of cold is always the reverse of the effect of heat, nor is there any department in physical investigation in which it could be safely assumed that if you reverse the cause you would simply reverse the effect. Though no one can love good who does not hate evil, we should greatly err if we endeavoured to measure the love of good, in our own hearts or in those of others, by our hatred of evil. It seems to us the lesson of Carlyle's life that he who does this grows narrower with the progress of experience. But his life taught much beside this, and we would not bid him farewell in contemplating any of his mere negations.

What we have called his political Manichæanism must, it seems to us, be the working theory of a part of man's life at all times. Uncompromising hostility towards the army of the devil is the condition of all that is energetic and beneficent in human action; Carlyle has not preached

this truth with too much energy. We shall never exaggerate the importance of the battle between the forces of good and evil, and even the distortion which brings home to our feeble minds its transcendent issues is valuable to us—if we can learn this truth in no other way, is necessary to us. He who has to fight cannot fight too resolutely. Our age has inadequately realised this truth, and Thomas Carlyle, we believe, was sent to teach it to us. All in life and duty that is *warfare* was lit up by him with a full sense of its meaning, and none who have drunk in his lesson can forget how large a part is warfare, how much we misread the lesson of life when we think that the soldier's task is the result of a mere blunder, and that wiser arrangements would unite the hostile banners and bid the serried hosts embrace. But Carlyle's view of life and duty errs in being too simple. He has, in one of his most striking writings, spoken of man as the revelation of God, and he might, we think, have found in this reference some meaning in the despised creeds, which speak of three persons in one God. Assuredly there are many persons in one man. When we look on any man as a soldier in the devil's army, it may be that we interpret rightly all that we need to know for the work that we have to do; but if we deem that this is all that is to be known, great is our error. If God is Redeemer as well as Judge, man must be so likewise, and none can truly judge his brother who has not sought, and is not ready a thousand times to repeat the attempt, to be his saviour. Carlyle seems to us to have changed the inward battle into an outward battle. But the battle to which all his more earnest, his more characteristic words bear witness is an inward one, and it is this witness which will live when all that is weak and exaggerated in his teaching is forgotten.

Reluctantly we bid him farewell, for it is a whole world from which we are turning. He has left no successor among us. But it is a world that cannot die. Let us bid him farewell in his own words—words true indeed of the humblest among us, but true in a special sense of the company of lofty and gifted souls, among whom he of whom we take our reverent farewell stood high, and



might, had he been more faithful to his own ideal, have stood among the very highest:—

‘It is a high, solemn, almost awful thought for every individual man, that his earthly influence, which has had a commencement, will never through all ages, were he the very meanest of us, have an end. What is done is done; has already blended itself with the boundless, ever-living, ever-working universe, and will also work there for good or for evil, openly or secretly, throughout all time. But the life of every man is as the well-spring of a stream, whose small beginnings are indeed plain to all, but whose ulterior course and destination, as it winds through the expanses of infinite years, only the Omniscient can discern. Will it mingle with neighbouring rivulets as a tributary, or receive them as their sovereign? Is it to be a nameless brook, and will its tiny waters, among millions of other brooks and rills, increase the current of some world-river? Or is it to be itself a Rhine or Danube, whose goings forth are to the uttermost lands, its flood an everlasting boundary-line on the globe itself, the bulwark and highway of whole kingdoms and continents? We know not; only in either case we know its path is to the great ocean.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Essay on Voltaire.

## ‘THE MAJORITY’

THERE is something both tranquillising and full of instruction in the word we have chosen for our title, as a description of those who have finished their life in this world. As each one of us grows older, it takes a new meaning. In early youth, death is a distinction, conferred upon a very few,—some dim figure, long secluded from our childish importunities in the quiet of a sick-room, which almost represented to our childish imagination the awe and mystery of the grave; or some companion snatched away by a fate which, at the time, seemed almost historic in its tragedy. After long years, the proportion of those who are objects of attention to sight and to memory becomes inverted. A sense of being left behind comes upon one who keeps both life and intellect beyond the span allotted to average man,—a pathetic yearning for fellowship, that no tenderness and respect from a different generation can supply. And something of it we come to feel long before the time of old age, as we look back, and discover that the majority of those who made the interest of youth remain images to memory only. We seem, at such moments, linked with the whole long past in a new degree. The feeling that we are trying to describe is at once strange and common-place. It is a feeling unknown to the thoughtless, to those who have felt too profoundly to reflect on their feelings, and to those for whom the present is too exacting in demand to let the past be heard. But with these exceptions, we suppose there is no one who has not awakened, with a curious surprise that it should be possible to awaken to anything so obvious,—to the discovery that of those whom we admire, or pity, or blame, it is but an insignificant fraction to whom the



admiration, pity, or blame of the whole world has any value whatever. And if at such moments the permanent interests of life have not stood out with a new distinctness, we know not what is to bring them home to him, in this world.

If the lessons of the great revealer are not wasted, there are two things which in the moment of loss are felt to be almost equally jarring—a censure that is needless, or a tribute that is false. We do not, at such moments, want words of criticism. We do not want to hear the whole truth about any one. But at no time do we so much desire to hear nothing but the truth. Indeed, it is at such moments, it appears to us, that the very meaning of truth is brought out to the mind with a new weight and distinctness. We see what it is, and we see what it is not; how true words may miss it, and even how untrue, or at least inaccurate, words may, on the whole, suggest it. We often feel facts misleading, we sometimes even feel fancies instructive, but falsehood is more abhorrent at that time than at any other. And this we should have thought would have been the verdict of admiration, as well as of affection. But we must confess that obituary notices, even when they come from those who have felt admiration in its purest form—admiration untouched by that egotistic or servile feeling which is so often its alloy—do not bear out this expectation. And it is, in fact, against this misuse of the flood-tide of sympathy that follows the departure of a great man that we would now bring forward the reminder that he has ‘joined the majority’; that it is impossible to be more than just to one without being less than just to ‘an exceeding great multitude, which no man may number.’

It is wasting a great opportunity not to be just to the dead. We may almost say that we lose thereby our only opportunity of justice. In many ways it is more important to be just to the living than to the dead. But it is also infinitely more difficult. What wonderful imagination it would need to see in a man’s lifetime all the excuses for his faults that come out, like the stars in the twilight, as we stand beside his grave! Or again, in looking back on

a finished life, how distinctly the shadow of its failures falls on its ideal! And though, perhaps, this is more obviously true of ordinary men and women than of those who have deeply influenced their generation, it is surely true of them also. There is a double meaning in the saying, ‘After death, the judgment.’ Death sets a man at the distance from us at which we see him in his true proportions; it shuts off the influences that confuse and bewilder the judgment, and shows us life as a whole. The judgment can only be delayed; it comes sooner or later. But we believe that it is a great evil to delay it,—we believe that those who disturb either way the true balance of feeling at the moment that a people’s attention is concentrated on a finished life, have much to answer for. Whether they give undue praise or undue blame, they defraud some lofty spirit of its meed of honour. Undue blame is unjust to one, undue praise is unjust to many. But, indeed, undue praise always involves undue blame. If you insist that grey is white, you tempt us to call it almost black. We may be quite satisfied with pointing out the greatness of a great man, without inquiring into his goodness. But if you assume that greatness implies goodness, you force upon our recollection, in a very large proportion of cases, the proofs that they are separable companions,—perhaps, if the truth must be spoken, not congenial allies.

There are many reasons why people are slow to recognise that truth. It is not given by a wide knowledge of literature. A man’s own works reveal his ideal, not his character, and the accounts of him given by others reveal only a part of his character. We do not read that the hero of a biography was selfish towards his wife, or overbearing to his friends; we learn nothing of his self-indulgence in trifles, or unscrupulousness about money matters. Some of these defects are as little suited to any permanent record of a life as roughness of skin to being copied in marble, and even when they must be regarded as features of the character, we rarely find any contemporary representation give them truly. And then, whenever we meet with an exception to the rule that



great gifts in one part of the character imply great deficiencies in another, we are apt (as with many other exceptions) to mistake its impressiveness for its frequency. Nevertheless, we believe that both experience and rational expectation would concur in warning us, as a rule, not to look for pre-eminent moral beauty and pre-eminent intellectual power together. Genius, we are certain, whether it be more or less, is a *disturbing* influence to the moral nature. Whenever we ignore this law of the spiritual world, we become unjust both to genius and to ordinary humanity. We become unjust to genius, in forgetting its difficulties. Consider, for instance, how the life of a Coleridge would appear to any one who came upon its details with the preconceived belief that intellectual greatness implied goodness! We require to judge such a life with the constant recollection that genius, though it tends to purify and elevate all natural impulses, by giving a rival to every merely animal instinct, yet also increases—immeasurably increases, we believe—the difficulty of resisting the natural impulses, such as they are. It makes a man’s *self* a better thing, to some extent (not necessarily to the extent which we expect), but it also makes it a more domineering thing. A man of great literary powers, for instance, is not tempted to take too much wine for mere want of something to do. But if he happens to feel the want of it, the temptation is much stronger with him than with most people. However, it is a still more important reflection that this undue praise of an individual means injustice to a larger number of mankind than even the whole enclosure of fame. We cannot give praise, without suggesting excuse,—it is, in fact, excuse, and not blame, which is the alternative of praise. The background of what we admire must be a moral condition little, if at all, below the standard of average humanity. If you praise a soldier for keeping a resolute hold on his colours, for instance, you incapacitate yourself for blaming him whenever, in the same circumstances, he lets them fall into the enemy’s hands. It is impossible to condemn that conduct of which we have singled out the contrary for honourable mention. Wherever, therefore, we speak of

any conduct as 'noble,' we imply that it is above the high-water mark of general conduct; in other words, we describe general conduct as below that level. Surely that reflection should check excessive praise. Wherever we call ordinary conduct heroic, we are unjust to the ordinary standard. We assume that most men are base, if we claim admiration of any one on the ground that he was not base; and thus to make one hero, we make many knaves. It is not only the obvious distortion of moral judgment which is evil. This is a grave evil. The careers of those who have passed away are meant, surely, to be a school of moral feeling to those who come after. But great men may teach us not only by their achievements, but by their failures. Of course, small men may do the like, but the scale of their teaching must be small. In great and lofty characters we see 'writ large' the laws of the spiritual world. They exhibit, on a scale for posterity to discern them, the mysterious correlations of spiritual force. Shall we welcome all indications of this law in the world of things as one of the most important of our intellectual possessions, and at the same time do all in our power to confuse and obscure its traces in the higher world of thought? Surely to act thus is to make a use of the most valuable of our memories against which they to whom we owe them would be the first to protest.

It is in no spirit of irreverence towards a great man lately taken from us that we would apply these remarks to him. In intellectual rank, we doubt if Carlyle has any superior among his contemporaries; and his fine, dignified character, impressive in its ruggedness, took a high place in the respect of many, and the warm love of a few. But he has been spoken of (solely on the ground that he never flattered the powerful, apparently), in terms which leave nothing fresh to be said, when we come to describe a life distinguished by heroism! Surely, to deal thus with the characters of great men is to debase the moral currency. If ever there was a man in describing whom a strict regard to truth and to proportion, which is truth, should have been observed, it was Thomas



Carlyle. The main virtue which he preached was truth—or, at all events (and it is not quite the same thing), the main vice which he denounced was falsehood. Why should we blur such a man’s epitaph with flattery? Why mar the recollections of an impressive character with exaggerations which bring out all its defects? If every character be noble which leaves on others an impression of moral weight and stability, his character was noble; but if we mean no more than this by the word, we leave ourselves without resource in describing the few who have joined lowliness to greatness, who have loved their fellows with a pure, compassionate, equable devotion, who have lived always in the best of their nature. What is meant by saying that his character was noble is, no doubt, that his ideal was noble. In truth, genius so vivifies and expands an ideal, endows it with such pregnant force, such quickening impulse, that the ideal of a man of genius is as much more important than his character, as most men’s character is than their ideal. There has always seemed to us an apology for the aberrations of genius in those words of Christ, ‘If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.’ We have sometimes wondered that that sentence has not been felt more perplexing. It would almost seem to mean that it is easier for those to do these things who do *not* know them. That text should be the keynote of every judgment on a great man. He knew these things, he made us know them; if he failed to do them, he was not so much guilty as unhappy. But then keep to the careful temperance of those words. Do not go on to say that he did the right, *because* he knew it. Urge as much as you will that he had a right to be tried by the ideal which he has created,—still, do not forget that ideal is not character, though it may be more important than character. We may say of Carlyle, as Michael Angelo of Dante, ‘Egli dice cose, e noi parole.’ But still it is untrue to speak as if words could take the place of deeds, when we come to estimate the man.

If for the moment we suppose that the noble ideal is the noble character, then we must ask whether the

ideal was perfectly noble. Achievement is necessarily imperfect, but if we are to judge a man by what he admired, we have a right to demand that the admiration shall be pure. How would Carlyle's reputation stand this test? Surely no writer who largely swayed public feeling has ever presented to it so mixed a group of models. We find in his *lararium* images of the noblest, and almost the ignoblest, of mankind. If we are to measure his character by his sympathies, we must take them as they were. We cannot found our estimate on one-half of his work. His influence, we fully believe, was purer than his ideal. By that blessed pre-eminence of good which is often hidden by the greater immediate forcibleness of evil, what was lofty and inspiring in his teaching remains for all time, and what was evil has long since perished,—indeed, it seems to us that it had remarkably little influence always. But then do not fix our attention on it by insisting that it did not exist. Do not force us to remember the tares that have been gathered in bundles for the burning, by insisting that the soil brought forth only wheat.

Are we mistaken in thinking that this exaggerated praise of the dead has become an increased tendency of the writers of the last quarter of a century? It is difficult to judge, because the kind of notice we are remarking on forms no part of literature, but we can see some reasons why it should be so. Throughout the whole world of thought and feeling we are now watching a gradual modification of the general standard, under the combined influence of a strengthened principle of democracy and a weakened faith. Both, we think, have some tendency to produce an exaggerated admiration for individual character. No doubt, at first sight, the first of these influences seems to tell in another direction. The desire for equality would in itself lead rather to the depreciation than to the worship of great men. But the desire for equality is not a feeling that can ever take possession of the whole of man's nature; and in proportion as it is banished from one part, it takes refuge in another. The tendency to exaggerate distinction of character is a natural conse-



quence of the spirit which protests against all inequality but that of character. But it is the second of these changes which is most obviously associated with that which we have regarded as the effect, in part, of both. It is natural that men should worship the dead, when they cease to worship God. Carlyle himself seems to us a lively illustration of this change. He believed in worship, whether or not he believed in God, and it is somewhat pathetic to remember on what strange idols this worshipping instinct found its exercise. And then, the loss of the belief in immortality tends obviously towards increasing this worship of the dead. If they are to have no immortality in Heaven, then, it is felt, let us do our best to give them an immortality on earth. Those who think of their well-loved dead as removed to a clearer light, a more strenuous work, and a deeper love, do not need to exaggerate the aspect they bore in this infinitesimal fraction of an endless career. An infinite future expands to contain all that they would associate of pure and noble with the faulty being whose very faults have become dear to them. When this future disappears, the vista must be found elsewhere. Hence sober colouring and accurate proportion are lost sight of, and if a man has one excellence, he must have all.

Let us not thus pervert two of the most elevating impulses by which we shall ever be visited,—our reverence for greatness, and our memory of the past. They will not be weakened by an alliance with sober truthfulness; they will be immeasurably strengthened thereby. There is a deep meaning in the quaint saying of Plato, that the art of measurement is that which would save the soul. Under the mystic Pythagoreanism there suggested, lies a deep sense of the healing power of proportion. We cannot measure great men in one sense; nay, in that sense we cannot measure poor ordinary beings like ourselves; our ‘art of measurement’ fails, when we would apply it absolutely to any other human soul whatever. But, relatively, it is our bounden duty so to apply it. To mistake the spiritual rank of our fellows is to mistake the authorised guides of man’s spirit in his long and difficult pilgrimage. Do not let us so misuse the name of a great

man,—above all, not of one who never ceased to proclaim himself the inveterate opponent of all untruth. His fame does not need it. When the oscillations of contemporary criticism shall have subsided, his will remain a striking figure for all time; while he cannot fail to be, to a few of all generations, something of what he was to so many of one,—a fiery prophet, amid whose scathing denunciations of hypocrisy and Pharisaism gleamed hopes of a kingdom of Heaven.



## JAMES FITZJAMES STEPHEN

THE memoir just given us by Mr. Leslie Stephen of his brother must be felt by the readers of this first edition to be one of the most interesting biographies of their time. We would not in these words imply any necessary limit to our tribute. We may augur more than contemporary attention for a work of which literary finish is ensured by the name of the author and inherent interest by that of the subject; but we approach it from a side somewhat unfavourable for any critical appreciation. It reflects so vividly the life of a period rich in varied change and pregnant with new development, that one whose earliest memories it hardly transcends, and who is led by some passages in it towards yet earlier memories vicariously shared, finds sufficient material in the mere transcript of suggestions inseparable from almost every name and every date it contains; and seeks rather to pursue them than to review their source. From the critical point of view we will merely remark that Mr. Stephen has obeyed the first canon of good literary work—he keeps consistently to his own point of view. It would not be ours. We could have wished to have been admitted to greater intimacy with his subject, and we should find little difficulty in making space for deeper revelations of an interesting mind by the removal of some passages which seem to us, for different reasons, unsatisfactory or superfluous. But, on the other hand, the book has not a sentence which could wound or mortify any one; it lifts no veil which should be unlifted; it is neither frivolous, nor gossipy, nor ill-natured. We welcome a return to the best traditions of biography in this respect, though, as we have confessed, we find the limitations,

which tell so admirably in some directions, in others not altogether to our mind. We doubt not that many readers of the volume will echo the eulogy and not the qualifying regret.

Few of its readers need more than a slight reminder of the main facts in the happy and prosperous life it commemorates. That the second person known to the world as 'Sir James Stephen' was called to the Bar in 1854; was in India in an important legal capacity from 1869 to 1872; and a judge from 1879 to 1891, is known to every one who will turn to this biography for a fuller expansion of these facts. His articles in the *Saturday Review* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* must be fresh in many memories; his talk lingers in many ears; his strong, distinct, masterful personality remains with many persons as one it would be quite natural to meet in the next social gathering they attend. Yet the memories of his youth bring us in contact with a life that has passed out of sight and almost out of remembrance. The world he quitted in 1894 was, we could imagine, almost as different from the world he entered in 1829 as some periods which are separated by centuries. So, at least, it seems to eyes which discern, between the milestones of the journey, that abundance of detail which belongs to contemporary vision. Doubtless this is to some extent what human beings must feel at all times when they contrast their own wealth of reminiscence with the bleached record of history. But surely, if there be any difference in the ripening and withering touch of time at one period and another, the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century will always remain as an epoch when both were at their height. How difficult to believe, for instance, that Stephen's defence of Dr. Rowland Williams (1861) for denying the inspiration of the Bible is little more than thirty years old! The heresies of the Court of Arches have long been the commonplaces of the pulpit. Or again, turn to his most important book—the essays on *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and reprinted as a volume only in 1873. How strangely is the reader haunted by the same sense of a certain waste-heap, as it were, of abandoned orthodoxy! Since that



book was published Mill's doctrine of Liberty has come into fashion and gone out of fashion, and the critic now might think it needful to emphasise the neglected truths Mill asserted, as the critic then thought it necessary to emphasise the neglected truths Mill denied. What a world of change that possibility chronicles! The life which recalls it is to the vicissitude of ages as a small convex mirror to the landscape that spreads over many a long mile and fades into blue distance.

But there is a deeper, and also a more unquestionable sense in which we may say that Fitzjames Stephen's life reflects the work of centuries in a lifetime; and it is on this that we would chiefly dwell. His character bears witness to a permanence of life below the ebb and flow of transient change. It speaks of that which the cradle does not begin, but continue; it tells of the inheritance that every generation receives, transmits, and then ignores or misconceives. This also we may say, more or less, of every biography. But that which makes each life a link in the chain of evolution, though it be a certain, yet is not necessarily a detachable, element in the complex whole. Perhaps we may be thought fanciful for discovering it here. When the inheritance from the past takes the form of reaction we can all recognise it; we see how the enthusiasm of the father measures the recoil of the son; how the very legacy of earnest aspiration, when confronted with the vision of imperfect achievement, reappears in the search for an opposite goal. But reaction rarely takes the form of simple recoil. What it retains may be transformed by the effort of severance from old association with other elements, and superficially unrecognisable; but we can see it if we look for it. And the two influences work together in ways we often cannot follow. A man rejects a particular doctrine to-day because he was taught it in his childhood, and has, as it were, worked out its error; and then to-morrow he will accept some deduction from its main principle, equally because he was taught it in his childhood. The passage from passionate adherence to passionate antagonism is far more rapid than the passage from either to indifference.

Such, at least, is the lesson we seem to gather from the book before us. In the rough, vigorous, somewhat contemptuous lawyer who is here presented to us, scornful of emotion, critical of tradition, sceptical towards all spiritual pretension, we detect the hidden Evangelical, half-feeling for a lost creed, half-defensive against a rejected superstition, but always unconsciously reminiscent of a form of faith long discarded, sometimes, we cannot but fancy, consciously regretted. The whole framework of his thought seems to us to need and suggest a divine Governor. All that he preached—and his utterances had all something of the character of a sermon—would have gained in meaning, in coherence, in vividness, if the world of human relation, as he conceived it, had melted into a world of superhuman relation; if the human laws he aimed at arranging and organising were the shadows of other laws which belong to the world of the Eternal. He would probably have thought any consistent Evangelical, in his day, more or less an idiot, yet he seems to us, in some sense, an incomplete Evangelical himself.

The epithet Evangelical is one which, for the reader of our day, needs a historic commentary almost as much as the epithet Puritanical; and the reader of Fitzjames Stephen's biography turns naturally for such a commentary to the essay of his father. How variously may we apply the saying of the Greek poet, 'The word outlasts the deed.' 'Mr. Over-Secretary Stephen'—to give him the expressive *sobriquet* which inverted his official designation—was to his own generation the mainspring of the Colonial Office; to ours, and we should imagine to many successors, he is the author of that charming description of a vanished phase of English religion which he wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* in his hours of recreation, and republished with a certain reluctance. It is curious to note that in this case a hearty enthusiasm and a reverent spirit of faith in things human and divine, have had a more conservative literary influence than sparkling wit and sound common-sense. Most readers, we imagine, have at least heard of Sir James Stephen's *Essay on the Clapham Sect*; how many know of the witty and wise letters advocating Catholic eman-



cipation under the pseudonym 'Peter Plymley,' whence he borrowed his title? Above 20,000 of the pamphlet were sold at the time; and no one who takes down Sydney Smith's collected writings wonders that brilliant wit and humour, enlisted in the cause of religious toleration, or, rather, civil justice, should find double or treble that number of readers; but even such wit as Sydney Smith's loses something of its point when the cause it advocates has long been won; whereas the picture of goodness, honour, and gracious kindness keeps its fragrance for ever. Sydney Smith throws ridicule on Catholic disabilities by a humorous suggestion of persecuting the Evangelicals:

'As it seems necessary to your idea of an established Church to have somebody to worry and torment,' Peter Plymley addresses his clerical brother,<sup>1</sup> 'suppose we were to select for this purpose William Wilberforce, Esq., and the patent Christians at Clapham. We will compel them to preach common-sense, and to hear it; to frequent bishops, deans, and other high Churchmen; and to appear (once in the quarter, at the least) at some opera, pantomime, or other light scenical representation; in short, we will enjoy the old orthodox sport of witnessing the impotent anger of men compelled to sacrifice their notions of truth to ours. And all this we may do without the slightest risk, because their numbers are (as yet) not very considerable. Why torture a bull-dog, when you can get a frog or a rabbit?'

In another letter he returns to Clapham from a different point of view, and betrays his real dislike to the Evangelicals:

'I would counsel my lords the bishops to keep their eyes upon that holy village: they will find there a zeal for making converts far superior to anything which exists among the Catholics. I am too firm a believer in the general propriety and respectability of the English clergy to believe they have much to fear either from old nonsense, or from new; but if the Church must be supposed to be in danger, I prefer that nonsense which is grown half venerable from time.'

<sup>1</sup> This and all our extracts are a little abridged.

It is tempting always to borrow a fragment of Sydney Smith's gold lace to brighten one's own dingy broadcloth; but we are not conscious of any guilty irrelevance in interpolating this raillery in a study of the character of Sir James Stephen's son. In Sydney Smith's plea for justice to a body of Christians less absurd than the followers of Mr. Wilberforce, and much more numerous, we discern, in bright, kindly caricature, the images of some of the most lovable of men: for fuller pictures of whom we may turn to Sir James Stephen's essay. Those who look upon the name Evangelical as a symbol for all that is narrow and tedious may thence learn to appreciate more truly a form of faith exhibited in the home of his father's friend, Henry Thornton, in association with qualities which might be appreciated by the most secular of mankind. Battersea Rise was to Evangelicism what Holland House was to Whiggery, and in the oval library planned by William Pitt (his only architectural achievement, we presume), or on the velvet lawn shaded by spreading chestnuts, and a noble tulip tree which, according to a belief firmly held by one of the children, Bonaparte in his fiendish spite was coming to England expressly to cut down, young Stephen, from behind the screen of his book, watched gay processions pioneered by members of Parliament and weighty philanthropists, but erratic and light-hearted there as though they had no thought unshared by the children who followed them. There, in later years, came one who may be reckoned to the Clapham sect from our point of view—Sir Robert Inglis—brought to that orphaned home in response to dying wishes which few men would have had the courage to formulate. Young and happily married, he gave up the independence of a separate household, so dear to the heart of an Englishman, and took up his abode in that Clapham villa to be—hardly a father, there was not enough difference of age—but a guide and guardian to nine formidable young people, at that stage of ruthless criticism and fierce intolerance which, though not quite so terrible in the year 1817 as to-day, we cannot imagine ever confronting without alarm. When, after a guardianship of twenty years, untroubled



by the memory of a single jar, he left Clapham for London, his adoptive relations formed the happiness of his remaining years; but the first acceptance of those relations was surely such a sacrifice as leaves its equal tribute of honour to him who gives and him who asks it.

We will venture on an illustration of the secular aspect of Evangelical goodness and of the impression made by it on other than Evangelical minds. Henry Thornton held the views of taxation adopted by an advanced party of our own day, and advocated a graduated income-tax. It was not by empty words that his approbation was testified. From the time that he failed to bring this reform within the sphere of legislation, the large fortune which he enjoyed as a wealthy banker paid its tribute to the Exchequer on the scale of his ideal, not his legal debt, and his theory of taxation was supported by the punctual deliverance of a sum which no legal officer claimed and which no grateful applicant acknowledged. The effect of a life regulated by such an ideal of duty was manifest when, in the prime of a happy and virtuous career, he had been called away from the world to which he had shown an example of a Christian life in alliance with a full secular activity, and his son and namesake had to confront the perils of the great financial crisis in December 1825. Such was the impression made by the stainless honour of the father that the help needed at this calamitous time was advanced by the Bank of England on the mere assurance of the young man—Henry Thornton the younger was only twenty-five—that the firm in which his father had been a leading member was solvent.<sup>1</sup> In the dark winter morning of December 1825 a curious spectacle might have been detected by an observer of preternatural acuteness—a visit to the Bank of England and a seeming burglary of the most audacious description. It was not thought wise that the extent of the financial crisis should be known, and before the subordinates of the Bank were in their places, the Governor and the Deputy Governor themselves counted out and handed over the gold, which was to be carried away in silence and secrecy. The seed of

<sup>1</sup> Pole Free and Co.

religious conviction was manifest in a commercial reputation which could be estimated in terms intelligible to the least spiritual of mankind.

The peculiar atmosphere of cultured, prosperous, genial Evangelicism which lives on Sir James Stephen's page owes its glow, no doubt, to the fact that it embodies a reminiscence. It is a part of its charm that there blends with it a ray of 'the light that never was on sea or land,' not even on the Clapham lawn that gathered under its leafy shades so many of the best and wisest of men and women. But truth of representation, we believe, is less blurred by the golden haze through which the longing eye reviews a far past than by the grey dust through which the weary traveller looks out upon a present experience. What we remember we know, even while we appear to exaggerate or forget some of its most prominent features, in a sense in which no one knows even his own emotions as they pass. A person who compares recollections of a distant youth with some contemporary expression of the feelings roused at the time will indeed often wonder at their contrast, and ask himself which is the truth and which the illusion. Such pearly lights gleam among the dull grey (as we thought it at the time), so much meaning comes out where we saw nothing but monotony, and then, again, so much that was trivial and irritating seems utterly blotted out, as if it had never been. Are we inventing now, or were we blind then? Surely blindness is more common than invention. Doubtless many a tiresome detail is blotted out in that glowing picture; we see a trace of it here and there. Sir James Stephen allows that 'even at Clapham the discerning might perceive the imperfections of our common nature, and take up the lowly confession of the great Thomas Erskine' (the Chancellor), "After all, gentlemen, I am but a man." 'The Clapham festivities,' he continues his deprecatory concessions, 'were not exhilarating. New faces, new topics, and a less liberal expenditure of wisdom immediately after dinner, would have improved them.' We transcribe the admission with reluctance, though certain far-off memories—far distant now, though almost



half a century nearer than his own—carry on the traditions of the Clapham life and insist on this side of it. Longing glances during the tragic summer of the Indian Mutiny were directed towards a certain sideboard in the house of a survivor of the Clapham sect, where the *Times*, corded and folded, reposed from Sunday to Monday morning, the intervening twenty-four hours being often filled with eager speculation as to its subject-matter, and not occupied with any discourse more spiritual than an average leading article, but somehow sanctified by an abstinence which was supposed to render Sunday less secular. A soft waft of repose now seems to breathe from those far-off Sabbaths, but we are well aware as we write of the influence of a ‘pathetic fallacy,’ and recognise that a *régime*, of which this eagerly regarded but unread newspaper may be taken as a symbol, must have had its narrow and exclusive side. It is important to note that Sir James Stephen felt this side of it, for a person who feels an oppressive influence does not ordinarily transmit it; and it does not appear that this side of Evangelicism ever weighed on his sons.

One of the most significant features of this phase of religion is the agitation against slavery, by no means, indeed, confined to those who held such views, but carried on by them with especial earnestness. By this holy war against the age-long crime of humanity the party was strengthened, purified, and elevated; all that was most characteristic in it became associated with the protest against tyranny over the most helpless and least interesting of mankind, and the rights of a downtrodden and inferior race, brutalised by oppression, became a sacred banner, lifting the aspirations of its followers above every taint of self-interest and every encroachment of the trivial and the narrow. Its achievements in this direction kept it before the eyes of the world as a conquering cause, and were, we cannot but fancy, the reason of a certain *prestige* in the secular world which few will doubt whose memories go far enough back, and which, apart from some such reason, they might find it difficult to explain. An important figure in this struggle was the grandfather of

Fitzjames Stephen, and none is, to our mind, more interesting. The sketch here suggests a vivid and dramatic career. From the time when the little James Stephen (the second of four men whom the reader of this biography has to remember under that name) stood by his father's side when the latter pleaded his cause as a debtor in the King's Bench, and a compassionate bystander slipped five shillings into the boy's hand, through adventures which might set up more than one novel, to the appearance of the anti-slavery reformer and Master in Chancery on the Clapham lawn, we follow his flighty, adventurous life with the same sense of intimacy as attaches to a well-drawn character in fiction. We warmly enter into an attachment that begins when he is fourteen, and though it suffers eclipse from a certain beautiful Maria, ends in a happy marriage and a profound grief when the birth of his youngest child costs the mother her life. In a few years, but not till a period of passionate grief has been traversed, he is consoled by the affections of a sister of Wilberforce—a kind stepmother to his children, though she sometimes tried them by offering a tract to grumbling post-boys who wanted half-a-crown, and to himself a wife as tenderly beloved and deeply mourned as her predecessor. The double feeling, after the death of the second wife, was sometimes quaintly expressed in his letters to her brother; in recalling the first bereavement he reminds himself that without the loss of his first wife he could never have married the second. And a touch of the comic is brought into the neighbourhood of a terrible tragedy, when we find him lamenting, on hearing of Sir Samuel Romilly's suicide, that he had withheld a letter of condolence on the bereavement which occasioned it; the memories of his own sorrows and the consolations with which it was intermingled being capable, he thinks, of inducing Romilly to survive the wife after whom he hurried into another world. Only the memories of an unspeakable sorrow could have inspired that regret, and a peculiar trustfulness have led to its expression. The over-estimate of what a letter from him might have effected is not really an expression of vanity or egotism, but rather a childlike



faith in the common root of human affections and the nearness of man to man.

The portrait of this second James Stephen in his son's little gallery is less attractive than some others found there, for the tie of kindred precluded the freedom of the artist, and Sir James borrowed a silhouette from Lord Brougham to fill the blank. A grandson can speak more freely, and the volume before us provides a better substitute; but we may take a more vivid impression of him from the *naïve*, desultory outpourings which he addressed to his brother-in-law and spiritual leader, from which we have already borrowed something, and over which no reader of the 'Clapham Sect' will grudge a few moments' further delay. They dispel the illusion that Evangelicism was necessarily a gloomy or narrow religion. James Stephen had a cordial welcome for every form of devout faith, and would have submitted without a murmur to that part of Sydney Smith's proposed persecution which enforced intercourse with dignitaries of the Church. When a tittering waiter, in response to his request for a 'good book,' on a Sunday afternoon at an inn, brings him Nelson's *Fasts and Festivals of the English Church*, he is delighted with a work alien to all the shibboleths of his sect; and, on a similar occasion, a landlady teaches him for the first time to appreciate the Apocrypha in an old-fashioned Bible; and he expatiates on the beauty of what many Evangelicals were taught to regard as 'a Popish book.' There is something very engaging in his self-revelation as shown in a letter labelled by Wilberforce, 'Dear Stephen, the picture of his heart,' from which, we flatter ourselves, the reader will not think the following extract too long:

'When you say "O! this bad world," it is not strange that folks like me complain, and yet, on recollection, that O! is a sigh for what folks like me are not so apt to sigh for—sin. To be honest to myself, however, I do grieve for the wickedness of the world, as much as for its plagues and troubles, though, I fear, generally with an admixture of bad temper.'

After this candid confession of what many will recognise

as a danger common to religious persons, he goes on to remind himself that his world is, after all, not so bad :

‘I was in a worse world in the West Indies, and God brought me to England. I thought my new world here bad, and tried, though faintly, alas ! to get a little above it ; and God brought me into the circle of such people as you and my dear S. (his wife) and Babington, etc. A hundred observations of the ways of Providence in what the world calls trifling incidents have convinced me that in this new system I am a satellite, placed in it more for your sakes than my own. I shall not be able to make your shoulders a jumping board to something higher, but if, by God’s blessing, I could go up with the class, as the very last or lowest member of it, it will be a great thing indeed, and expecting, as I do, nothing higher in this earthly school of ours, I regard the present form as the shell.<sup>1</sup> When we burst it, the same beneficent teacher will place us probably in a world where, compared to the present, there will be no propensity to evil, and yet, in my perhaps unwarrantable speculations, education will not end here.’

There is, to our mind, a peculiar interest in the last sentence of that quotation. One who ventured, even in this timid manner, to contemplate the future life as a continuation of the interests and the discipline of this did not live under that lurid glare and inky blackness which we sometimes imagine the constant background to all Evangelical religion. Those who had departed into the realm of the unseen were, in the imagination of James Stephen, so far from a remote, unsympathetic heaven that they still busied themselves with the minute cares and interests of their dear ones here, guiding the hand and the eye towards volumes whence the heart might derive nutriment, and emphasising, as with a loving pencil, passages in which they brought out new meaning. One who felt himself thus united with his lost ones might not in words protest against the dogma of an endless hell, but he was secured against all influence from it in feeling ; and we are not surprised to discover that, on the

<sup>1</sup> The odd pun which this word may suggest was not, we believe, intended. Stephen was not a public school man, and his abrupt transition from a school to a nest is quite in character.



page of his son this dogma is shown to be as baseless in Scripture as it is abhorrent to the whole nature of man.

We have lingered at what, unless we have succeeded in inspiring the reader with our own affection for Fitzjames Stephen's grandfather, may seem an excessive length, for it cannot be said that there is much obvious inheritance from him to be traced in the life of his grandson. Their warm affections were common, but happily that is not a distinctive trait in the lives of Englishmen, and almost everything else was different. We should have more excuse for dwelling on the character of his son, but the portrait of Sir James Stephen is given at full length in the volume before us, and his writings are well known. We cannot say, indeed, that we find our wish for a fuller acquaintance with him entirely gratified; the account here is more elaborate than enlightening, but it is full of a deep reverence and a warm affection; and we console ourselves with the hope that at some future time we may be afforded an opportunity for more intimate knowledge of one so much beloved that such revelation can hardly be unwelcome to those who loved him best. We remember hearing that Fitzjames Stephen, after his defence of Rowland Williams, asked the person best able to answer the question, 'Have I said a word which my father would have disapproved?' and received a negative answer. The reminiscence, which we guarantee only in its second-hand form, at least expresses the close and intimate relation between the father and son, with them as unbroken as in other cases it is uncommon. In most prosecutions for heresy, we presume Sir James Stephen would have been on the side of the defendant. His own creed was not entirely free from a suspicion of heresy. He gives it at length in the 'Epilogue' to his *Ecclesiastical Essays*, and we learn without surprise that the result was some long-forgotten murmurs on his appointment to the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge in 1849; for it contained an emphatic disavowal of what many persons think the cardinal doctrine of Evangelical religion—that of an endless hell.

It is startling to think of the contrast between what

Evangelicism *did*, and what it *taught*. It raised the wretched; it freed the slave; it penetrated to the dungeon of the criminal; it took thought for all that were desolate and oppressed; and it preached a Creator, who, we may say broadly, had no sympathy with any of these things. Few among those who have thought of God as in sympathy with the highest ideals of man have worked for their fellow-men as earnestly as those who would have been ready at once to start a society to protect any victims of human dealings which resembled the Evangelical plan of Salvation; but however we may explain it, the Evangelical creed was, a hundred years ago, a living influence in English life. It was associated with less intellectual power than the High Church reaction which followed it, and is now commemorated in a less literary form, but it penetrated, we should imagine, to a much deeper stratum of life. A book written by Fitzjames Stephen's maternal great-grandfather, *The Complete Duty of Man*, which may be taken as the compendium of Evangelical doctrine, went through more than twenty editions, and made an impression to the depth of which various facts recorded in the biography of its author, Henry Venn, bear ample testimony. It is impossible to doubt the spiritual nutriment found by its readers, in a volume which no one could read now. Let us turn for a partial explanation of the problem to what we feel the most interesting page in this biography—the letter from Sir James Stephen, written in August 1854, which assumes his son's sympathy in the Evangelical creed. The error of the Evangelical party seemed, to Sir James Stephen—

‘That they are determined to erect into a science a series of propositions which God has communicated to us as so many detached and, to us, irreconcilable verities; the common link or connecting principle of which He has not seen fit to communicate. I am profoundly convinced of the consistency of all the declarations of Scripture; but I am as profoundly convinced of my own incapacity to perceive that they are consistent. I can receive them each in turn, and to some extent I can, however feebly, draw nutriment from each of them. To blend them one with another into an harmonious or congruous whole surpasses



my skill, or perhaps my diligence. But what then? I am here not to speculate but to repent, to believe, and to obey; and I find no difficulty whatever in believing, each in turn, doctrines which yet seem to me incompatible with each other. It is in this sense and to this extent that I adopt the whole of the creed called Evangelical. I adopt it as a regulation of the affections, as a rule of life, and as a quietus, not as a stimulant to inquiry. So, I gather, do you, and if so, I at least have no right to quarrel with you on that account. Only, if you and I are unscientific Christians let us be patient and reverent towards those whose deeper minds or more profound inquiries, or more abundant spiritual experience, may carry them through difficulties which surpass our strength.'

It seems strange to think that these words were addressed to Fitzjames Stephen only forty-one years ago, and still more to learn that the occasion of their being written was a chance of his becoming the editor of an Evangelical newspaper. He labels the letter with a somewhat impatient comment on his father's humility: 'Fancy old Venn and Simeon having had more capacious minds than Sir James.' The gradation of capacity which should qualify a Venn or a Simeon to harmonise beliefs which the elder Stephen could receive only as detached fragments is not the point which strikes us as important to notice in this letter. We cite it as affording a clue to some of the perplexities with which we look back on the Evangelical phase in English life. May it be that in the vision of truths too large for our grasp an element of that which the logical intellect, if it insist on systematising all belief, can only reckon as contradiction, is the very test of a glimpse behind that curtain on which phenomena are flashed from some world inaccessible to sense, or to the faculty that draws inferences? If we look on the Evangelical creed on the outside, nonsense is too kind a name for it. Under a legal fiction we confront a barbarous scheme devised by a tyrant, who seeks to establish his own glory by the infinite misery of those who fail to prostitute the idea of goodness in applying it to him. But a coloured window is not more different, seen from within and from without, than are the truths which centre in

the thought of Redemption. Contradiction does not disappear when we leave behind us the idea of an endless hell. 'God hates evil—God made the world.' There all that human logic can label as contradiction appears in its sharpest antagonism, yet some of the finest intellects of our race have believed both these things. The vision of a Creator and a Redeemer who are truly one defies all the certainties of the mere understanding, but it has been to myriads an explanation of some of the mysteries of their own being, and there will always be some who seek no other proof than this. The thought of our time has severed these opposites: some refuse to believe that God made the world, others that the hatred of evil—in other words, of sin—is divine. Fitzjames Stephen kept the traditions of his Evangelical creed in so far as the latter belief embodies them; in all other respects his character seems to us moulded by a strong recoil from Evangelicism. But what he inherited from it gives an individual stamp to his mind, and we seem to trace it in all that was most valuable in what he taught and did.

If we turn from that letter of Sir James Stephen to an extract from *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, which contains what seems to us the deepest thought its author ever expressed, we may surely discern an element common to both in the faith of the father and the political speculation of the son. Let the reader set the two passages side by side and judge:

'It is surely clear that our words are but very imperfect symbols, that they all presuppose matter and sensation, and are thus unequal to the task of expressing that which, to use poor but necessary metaphors, lies behind and above matter and sensation. It seems to me that we are spirits in prison, able only to make signals to each other, but with a world of things to say which our signals cannot describe at all. The things which cannot be adequately represented by words are more important than those which can.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not the same thing to find no difficulty in believing, each in turn, doctrines which seem incompatible with

<sup>1</sup> *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, p. 297.



each other, and to feel that the things which cannot be adequately represented by words are more important than the things which can. No; but he who is convinced that every creed leaves its most important elements faintly suggested, is not far from the concession that what words cannot adequately express, logic cannot completely analyse. It is true that these words of Fitzjames Stephen strike us as incompatible with much else that was characteristic of him. But the most luminous suggestions which a man has it in him to give to the world will often be found to be those which no logical system could arrange in a coherent whole with his ordinary views of life. Fitzjames Stephen abhorred mysticism, and in that description of language, as the signals of spirits in prison, he gives utterance to the truth that lies at the base of all mysticism. And to us it seems the most important truth he ever did utter.

His Evangelical inheritance is not quite so interesting to us when it takes the aspect of reaction, but it is more obviously characteristic. And here again we may find Evangelical foreshadowings. His brother gives a striking account of his composing, with tears and prayers, audible through the thin partition of the room where he wrote it, his article for the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the death of Lord Palmerston. Mr. Stephen's summary of the article (we have wished here, and constantly, that he had allowed us more quotation) informs us that the honour was paid to Palmerston for the patriotic high spirit which enabled him to take a conspicuous part in building up the great fabric of the British Empire. But 'he was also a man of the world, and a man of pleasure; he had not obeyed the conditions under which alone, *as every preacher will tell us*' (how far is 1895 from 1865!), 'heaven is to be hoped for. Patriotism, good nature, and so forth are, we are told, mere "filthy rags," of no avail in the sight of heaven.' We hardly need follow his repudiation of that belief. 'If good and evil be not empty labels of insincere flattery it is "right, meet, and our bounden duty" to kneel beside the great, good, and simple man whom we all deplore, and to thank God that it has pleased Him to remove our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world' (p. 217). It is

interesting, as measuring alike what is common and what is special in the successive stages of our spiritual evolution, to compare Fitzjames Stephen's words on the death of Palmerston with Wilberforce's on the death of Pitt. We give the passage at length, for the work in which it is found may, at the present day, be boldly treated as if it were manuscript.

'O, what a lesson does Pitt's latter end read to us of the importance of attending to religion in the days of health and vigour. Poor fellow! For a fortnight or more before his death he sat in his chair, neither reading nor talking. Conversation in a few moments fatigued him. It was not till the morning before his death that the Bishop of Lincoln could get leave to speak with him as a dying man. The Bishop proposed to pray with him. Pitt at first, poor fellow, objected that he was not worthy to offer up any prayer. The Bishop assured him that was the very state of mind in which prayer was most properly offered. I am not aware, but have reason to fear the contrary, no farther religious intercourse took place before or after. Pitt was a man who always said less than he felt on such topics. O, my dear friend, what a scene does the dying chamber of this great man exhibit! But what has struck me most is that he may truly be said to have died of a broken heart—he who was Prime Minister of England, etc. . . . Yet<sup>1</sup> to the very last he indicated that astonishing zeal in his country's service which his whole life had displayed.'

It will only be a superficial reader who will feel it fanciful to associate the view taken by Wilberforce of Pitt with the view taken by Stephen of Palmerston. There is a striking difference, certainly, between the timid, awe-struck tone of the Evangelical of 1806, and the somewhat scornful Agnosticism of sixty years later. But it seems to us that in that brief allusion to Pitt's broken heart—that abrupt turning from his being 'Prime Minister, etc.' as if thoughts crowded upon the writer he was afraid of expressing—Wilberforce came as near to the confidence of Fitzjames Stephen that the man who loved his country was dear to God, as was possible to any one living at that time

<sup>1</sup> These last words refer to another person. But they so evidently carry on Wilberforce's thoughts of Pitt, that I venture to include them.



and in his circumstances. His heart went out with a deep yearning to the old friend whose frolics he had shared in youth, and who now, 'with Palinure's unaltered mood,' had fallen at his post, unable to spare any attention from the spectacle of England's ruin for the salvation of his own soul. Was human friendship more faithful than divine Fatherhood? Fitzjames Stephen's conclusion would have fitted on to the passage we have quoted as the splinters of a broken staff. The friends of William Pitt might more appropriately than the friends of Lord Palmerston (for whom indeed the phrase comes in somewhat oddly) thank God for removing their brother from the miseries of this sinful world, as both may be associated in imagination with that assemblage of 'just men made perfect,' which shall reunite all the patriots of the world.

What made the lay sermons on liberty, equality, and fraternity which appeared in the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette* so impressive to many of their readers, however, was not their author's reaction from the beliefs which he inherited from both sides of his ancestry, but in transmuted form those beliefs themselves. The view of liberty which he attacks in the writings of John Mill is based on a view of human goodness which takes all its meaning from its inversion of the doctrine of the Fall of Man. That humanity, when exempt from the interference of authority, tends naturally towards good is, as he shows, an assertion neither proved nor axiomatic, and we may add that it would never have been the rallying cry of a party if its opposite had not been the corner-stone of a creed. Fitzjames Stephen would have rejected the creed with scorn, no doubt. But he rejected quite as decidedly, and more vehemently, the political reaction from that creed. That smooth optimism which finds in the conception of progress an adequate goal of aspiration, and rounds off the merely human view of life in its satisfied completeness, was almost as abhorrent to him as it would have been to his Evangelical ancestors. The enthusiasm of humanity! He would have none of it. His view of humanity was one that seemed always to bring one in sight of the Fall of Man; as in all that expressed his deeper aspirations we seem to catch some echo

from the great thought of Redemption. These thoughts, as theological dogmas, were absurdities to him. But none of the Evangelical ancestors, of which two streams met in him, were more convinced of the significance of the human truths which they symbolise than he was.

We cannot deny that whatever is hard or cruel in that sense of human folly and wickedness did find its reflection in a mind that reflected so much of its strength. An article by him in the *Saturday Review*, written at the time of the Indian Mutiny and entitled 'Deus Ultionum,' was perused by one of its readers with a pain which recurs to memory after the sorrows and disappointments of nearly forty years. The grandfather who gave his energies to the protection of a downtrodden race, and the grandfather who gave his energies to the propagation of missionary enterprise among the Heathen might each, one fancies, have returned to earth in order to protest against an utterance which proclaimed to 200,000,000 of our fellow creatures that we worshipped a God of vengeance. The course of English thought during the Indian Mutiny is a wonderful warning against the spirit then preached as righteous. England was given over to passionate belief in cruelties which her sons were almost ready to copy, and canons of evidence were set at defiance in order that a bloodthirsty spirit of revenge might find a pretext—not for punishment of murder, there was no one who wished to secure to any murderer more than a hearing before the law, but—for stimulating a burst of popular fury sweeping away all inconvenient obstacles, and spreading itself untrammelled by the enclosures of a comparative innocence and the gradations of more or less excusable guilt. Exaggerated accounts of the atrocities, says Mr. Stephen, were then accepted, as if these exaggerated accounts had been substantiated by some evidence which a later discovery had invalidated. In truth there was simply no evidence for them. They were the creation of an excusable panic, but the apologist who fostered them was one who was bound, by every traditional and personal characteristic, to stand forth and demand that opinion shall justify itself by the production of evidence, and that



vague general belief shall be accepted as a verdict by no one. A Nemesis pursued his pen when it spoke of India, and we have the astounding sentence from it which describes India as a place 'where we can work *and make money*; but for which no Englishman ever did, or ever will, feel one tender or genial feeling.' We transcribe with regret the only sentence in the book which we should call vulgar as well as arrogant, but it expresses a part of his nature which no critic can venture to leave wholly in shadow. In other respects a sturdy contempt for popular sentiment stood him in good stead, and every one will remember the refusal to respite a brutal murderer which was simultaneously denounced by irresponsible journalists and justified by the confession of the guilty person. And in the case of Governor Eyre and the Jamaica insurrection, he seems to have felt at once the difficulties and responsibilities of authority with a distinctness representing almost the ideal elements of a just verdict in such a case.

The passage in the book to which we should assign the second place in interest (the first being the letter from Sir James Stephen cited above) is the description given on p. 125 of the preaching of Frederick Maurice, at Lincoln's Inn Chapel. The allusion to an influence upon his hearer, which we had always imagined considerable, is disappointingly brief, and somewhat chilled, we fancy, by being given in *obliqua oratio* instead of quotation; but it vividly recalls hours which, if any part of the past could be reproduced in experience, some of us would most earnestly beckon from their shadowy repose. That tremulous voice returns upon the ear, that 'dim religious light' glimmers once more through the 'storied windows,' and even the slumbrous influence of the little chapel seems again to blend with that of the pathetic monotone, weighted with a profound conviction, and allied with a certain sequence of ideas that was also somewhat monotonous, when one discourse was compared with another, though in each individual case there was a startling assemblage of diverse views. The preacher passed from a statement of difficulties which, as Fitzjames Stephen says, 'Tom Paine could not put more

pithily and expressively' to a new world, in which these difficulties were out of sight and forgotten, the transition being made during an invasion of glowing and poetic mist, which found everything clear and left everything clear, and which should not, therefore, in our opinion, be spoken of as characteristic of the preacher. When Fitzjames Stephen said, long afterward, that to listen was like 'watching the struggles of a drowning creed,' he confused the impression on his own mind with that which inspired the lips of the speaker. Nevertheless, we would add our suspicion that the influences of Lincoln's Inn Chapel may have tended to ripen the seeds of scepticism in his mind. We have always thought that the clear and forcible statements of religious difficulties to which he here alludes, although they embodied deep convictions and profound sympathies, were somewhat misleading in their influence on sceptical hearers. There are many difficulties, in answer to which all that any one can say is, 'I see that, and I see something beyond it.' But, in the first place, this should always (as it is in the letter we have quoted from Sir James Stephen) be a personal expression; we should never forget the distinction formulated by a great philosopher<sup>1</sup> between those truths of which we may say, 'It is certain,' and those of which we must say, 'I am certain.' In Maurice's glowing sense of human unity, and (may we add?) almost superstitious dread of anything that savoured of individualism, he was apt to lose this distinction, and to claim for the truths by which he lived, supposing only that their enunciation were cleared from confusion, a universal acknowledgment, the lack of which, to minds like Stephen's, invalidated every other claim he made. And then, in the second place, though this is the only answer to the deepest problems that confront belief in the teaching of Christ, it is not the only answer to all difficulties, and Maurice often spoke and preached as if it were. When a sharp, logical intelligence, fashioned on the anvil of law, and keen in its scrutiny of everything that called itself evidence, found inconsistencies in the Gospel narratives spoken of as intellectual discipline, given to teach humility, we doubt not

<sup>1</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.



that a contempt for that particular assertion, which we cannot call altogether unjust, swung him far from a sympathy felt in former days for utterances from the same teacher, and that a natural scepticism triumphed by the fall of a temporary faith.

Fitzjames Stephen was, says his brother, a born lawyer—or, in other words, we would add, a born sceptic. Whether that be felt praise or blame, it assigns its object to a select class. It is our belief that, rare as is profound conviction, consistent doubt is even rarer. Fitzjames Stephen was one of the few men of our time who have looked on both sides of the questions most deeply interesting to humanity, and listened with impartial attention to the Yes and No which answer its deepest yearnings. The No, apparently, advanced upon the Yes as the years went on, but he never lost a certain sympathy with the other side. He had a passionate scorn for those who tried to manufacture belief out of desire, and he never distinguished between the masquerade of wish as belief, and the conviction, which seems to us to afford the best evidence of spiritual truth, or, indeed, of all truth, that added power is the test of knowledge. We recall in some of those newspaper articles, which seem to us to give the best picture of his mind, an impatient question whether any one professed to have an intuition that Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea in 33 A.D. The question indicates a dividing line between the provinces of criticism and of faith. He inherited from his Evangelical ancestors a disposition to obliterate the line, and his recoil from them inverted the interests at stake in it. Yet we find still his sympathies with them emerging, not only in declarations of a conviction which, so far as we can remember, no one else who had travelled as far as he from Christian belief ever had the courage to formulate—the conviction that morality must be profoundly affected by the surrender of Christian doctrine—but also by a certain inconsistency in those picturesque metaphoric illustrations of the condition of the human race in which this surrender was expressed most forcibly. Mankind were the passengers on a ship whose destination was un-

known, yet still the human duty was typified by some aid given by the passengers towards the steerage of the ship in a direction possibly leading to vast disaster. Mankind were the travellers in a snowstorm, possibly on the edge of a precipice, yet still the human duty was a fearless advance. It was as if, when he turned from the picture to the moral, his father or grandfather took the pen, and enforced a conclusion at issue with all the premisses. Or let us rather say that the picture of a pilgrimage through vast dangers, and with no rational guidance, roused from some depth of that ancestral inheritance his own latent conviction that human instincts, no less than human experience—far more than much that calls itself human experience—form data for the conclusions of belief. Là, où finit le raisonnement, commence la certitude.

With that thought let us leave this sturdy typical Englishman, so full of faults, so rich in the qualities which seem almost to justify faults. His glowing personality penetrated the formulas of journalism, and one who never heard his voice feels, as some of its utterances are recalled, as if its accents were vibrating on the ear. One such utterance recurs with a peculiar force; it is that which he wrote on the death of John Stuart Mill, and, though we quote it only in an inaccurate recollection, it shall form our farewell to him: 'May he have awakened to the discovery that the universe in which he found so much that was full of interest was wider than his conception of it, and that his eyes are now opened to new realms, of which he never dreamed, yet where his spirit is at home.'



## THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF GEORGE ELIOT

THERE is, in one of the letters of Sir Walter Scott, a fine passage on the death of Napoleon, in which he compares his feelings on receiving the intelligence to the effect produced by the launch of a three-decker. The space suddenly left vacant, he says, had in each case impressed his imagination more than the object by which it had previously been filled. In truth, the remark might be applied to the blanks left by those who filled no extensive space in the minds, perhaps not even in the hearts, of their contemporaries. We are surprised to find when they are gone how large it is. And possibly, indeed, this may be felt more true of ordinary beings than of the 'large-brained woman and large-hearted man' (to adopt Mrs. Browning's description of the only woman who seems to us entirely her intellectual equal) whose departure has recalled the simile. We do not believe any genius ever received more contemporaneous recognition. Still it is true that Death in her case, as in so many others, reveals to us the large space she occupied in our attention. She has left no successor. Except in the sense that every source of interest tends to replace every other, there is no one to take up any part of her inheritance. What other writer of fiction, for instance, could have been cited by a lecturer on ethics, as she was by Mr. Maurice at Cambridge? Imagine Lovelace the object of that kind of analysis which, on the occasion we refer to, a professor of moral philosophy applied to Tito! Yet *Clarissa* is quite as seriously moral a work as *Romola*. It is no mean genius which is thus thrown into the shade by the side of Tito's creator. When such a spirit passes from among us, the

attempt to estimate our loss—or, from another point of view, our gain, never so distinctly perceived as in the moment of loss—may be made from many sides. What rank in the great hierarchy will be assigned to George Eliot by those whose opinion, sifted from all that is ephemeral, will remain the unassailable verdict of humanity, it is not the object of the present essay to inquire. We would make an attempt which is at once more important and less difficult,—we would endeavour to give some contribution towards a judgment on her moral influence. Unquestionably she was one who largely moulded the aspirations of her readers. What shape did she give them? In what respects is it different with them from what it would have been if she had never written a line?

The critic cannot flatter himself that he opens an original line of thought in putting these questions. Ever since she began to write, the reviews and magazines have been full of attempts to answer them, and it happens that the only criticism which we have heard mentioned as giving her pleasure was a little posthumous essay, published by Messrs. Blackwood, which was altogether devoted to this problem. She seems to us, indeed, a standing refutation of a very *banal* judgment (repeated, however, since her death) on the moral element in literature. It is often said, and perhaps still oftener assumed, that a work of art must stand the lower for a serious moral purpose. We are all familiar with the illustrations of such an argument. To speak of the moral element in Shakespeare would be like speaking of the moral element in life itself. You will find it here and there—a moral might be attached to some of his plays almost as readily as to a fable of Æsop. But there are parts of actual life of which we might say the same. There are glimpses of moral purpose in all history and all individual experience; but we shall find at least as much in both of what bewilders the moral sense as of what enlightens it. Think, for instance, how a writer with a moral purpose would have concluded the history of Sulla. History alone could have dared to tell us of a peaceful end to such a life as his, and History again and



again repeats the defiance to our moral sense. Biography too, if it could be perfectly unreserved, would do likewise, on its small scale. It is impossible to avoid recognising, in a large part of life, not only a series of *events* which, taken alone, would have no guidance for the moral sense, but even a series of *feelings*. We have striven long and dutifully in a particular direction, and the result has been utter failure there, and some mistake elsewhere, for to work hard in one part of life means generally to let something slip in another region. We have made a great sacrifice, and it seems utterly wasted. Or the perplexity may be the other way. We have clutched some good lawlessly, and found it abidingly precious. We have done a mean thing, and sucked strength out of it. We suppose there is no one who has not often had to remind himself, in reviewing his own life or that of others, of those profound words, 'Let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest.' So far as history or fiction is a record of this kind of experience it cannot be called moral. And unquestionably the unmoral world claims a large half of literature. Shakespeare and Scott, though they do not ever, we think, mirror the bewildering problems of history (for these, we feel, are hardly dramatic subjects, and such a drama as Shelley's *Cenci* seems to us an illustration, not a confutation of the fact), yet are full of a like impartiality between good and evil. For instance, Henry v. is painted as a fine chivalrous character, full of noble impulse, the ideal of a soldier. And it is incidentally mentioned to us, just as it would be in reality, that he has left an old friend—guilty, indeed, of licence and immorality, but not of anything profoundly criminal, or in which his royal master had not shared—to die of a broken heart. Does Shakespeare mean this as a great blemish on the character of his kingly hero? The question is idle. For our own part, we do not believe a nature strongly imbued with moral sympathy could have painted this without giving some sign of disapprobation. But we readily confess that, in looking at it in this way, we quit the right point of view for judging of Shakespeare. Such actions as this are conceived, not as either moral or immoral, but as *natural*.

And, so far as such a spirit as this predominates in any writings, the writer can hardly be said to exert a moral influence. The influence by which sympathy is widened and varied may be called moral in a certain sense, but this use of the word is an instance of that tendency to make an epithet descriptive of one good thing describe all good things, which seems to us one of the commonest sources of intellectual confusion. A great writer may be entirely moral in this sense, he may take the reader into a healthy moral atmosphere, without stimulating, perhaps even while somewhat deadening, the judgment of right and wrong. This might be said of Scott. His influence is moral only as the influence of Nature is moral. It refreshes the spirit as a lonely stroll by the sea-shore, as a gallop on a spirited horse, as a laugh from a child. Everything healthful is encouraged by it, but it holds in solution no distinctly moral truth. It cannot be denied that there is a certain refreshment, a certain repose, in literature, which is in this sense unmoral. No faculty more needs rest than that which takes cognisance of the distinction between right and wrong; and the literature which provides exercise for the remainder of our being is helpful and valuable, not only to the part of the nature exercised by it but to the moral judgment itself. So much we would concede to the ordinary depreciation of moral purpose in literature. It does not characterise some of the greatest literary creators, and the literature which it does not characterise has a charm of its own.

So much we would concede, but no more. A distinctly moral purpose is to be found in some works that share the immortality of *Hamlet* and of *Macbeth*. It seems to us true of the great memorials of the Attic stage. Of course we do not mean that the lesson of Sophocles and Æschylus can be distilled into a neat motto; but they are moral in this sense, that the events and characters depicted by them present to the reader's mind thoughts which stand in close relation to the conscience, and affect the reader as an expression of sympathies, balanced indeed and alternating, but playing round a moral centre, and never far removed from that anchorage. And they do not only present this



element as it is in Shakespeare, interrupted and checkered by a sort of careless impartiality—as in the way Henry's desertion of Falstaff is told,—but they make us feel that every step they follow has a certain *moral direction*. We are, at every development in the drama, led nearer to a moral goal. There is no mere play of life and character. And the same may be said of many poets who, though standing lower in the scale, yet occupy no mean place in it. Byron owes a large part of his force to being distinctively the poet of the conscience. Shelley is, above all, a protestant against tyranny. If we quitted the heights of literature we could add many names to the list of those who have given us their best from the point of view of the artist, and whose works are yet filled with a moral atmosphere. In literature, as elsewhere, many are called and few chosen; and not a few failures may be reckoned here, as elsewhere, but the failure is not in the aim.

That the great name of George Eliot must be added to the list will not, we presume, be disputed by any one. There is nothing impartial about her genius. It is the claim of her countless admirers, and the indictment of her few mere critics, that she is a moral teacher, not merely as every true artist is a moral teacher, but as are those whose delineations are coloured by sympathy, and shadowed by disapproval. Indeed, a large part of her immense popularity is traceable to the didactic element in her works. It is a mistake, though a very common one, to suppose that preaching is a form of utterance unpopular with the hearer. We believe a good actor does not acquire an audience as readily as a good preacher. Didactic fiction we consider the most popular form of literature; and that a first-rate genius should take it in hand in our day has been a piece of extraordinary good fortune for that mass of intelligent mediocrity which supplies the staple of ordinary readers. In reading her books, that numerous class which hankers after originality found two of the strongest literary tastes gratified at once—the liveliest fiction held in solution by the most eloquent preaching. The latter element can be ignored by no one. No preacher of our day, we believe, has done so much to mould the

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moral aspirations of her contemporaries as she has, for none other had both the opportunity and the power. In losing her we have lost the common interest of the intellectual ranks most widely separated. She had a voice to reach the many and words to arrest the few. She afforded the liveliest entertainment to the ordinary novel-reader and the deepest speculation to many who never looked into another novel. Her influence was as wide as it was profound.

This attempt at an appreciation of her influence is made by one in whom, to the influence felt by the many, was added the enlightening power of such an acquaintance as any of them might have gained, had chance thrown it in their way; and the criticism which follows embodies reminiscences, which as they were not associated with the gratifying mark of peculiar confidence, so they are not entangled by anything that has to be sifted away before they can be shared by the public. So much the more are they characteristic of what was best in George Eliot. For in reviewing the whole impression thus made on the mind, and seeking out first, as is fitting and natural, its legacy of gratitude, we would fix on the wonderful degree to which she has lighted up the life of commonplace, unheroic humanity. If to any of her admirers we seem to lower her place in literature by representing it as something that all could appreciate, such a feeling would have found no sympathy from her. There was no taint of intellectual aristocracy in her sympathies. She once said, in referring to Mendelssohn's visit to England, that the musician's power to move the crowd with a visible thrill of enthusiasm would have been the object of her aspiration, had she been allowed her choice of the form her genius might have taken. The yearning seemed an expression of that respectfulness for ordinary mankind which embodied itself in portraiture that all could appreciate. Nothing recurs more emphatically to the memory which seeks to gather up its records of her, than her vehement recoil from that spirit which identifies what is excellent with what is exceptional. The sacredness of humdrum work was one of the strongest



convictions, bearing on practical life, which she ever thus expressed; and it must have been a large deduction from the happiness of her fame that it so often imposed on her (in common, we presume, with all persons of genius) the duty of checking the aspirations of that large mass of average mankind that seeks an escape from the vocation which she felt so lofty a one. This spirit finds fuller expression in her works, we believe, than in those of any other great writer of fiction. Almost all her most loving creations are of those men and women who would not, in actual life, be marked off from the crowd by any commanding gifts of intellect or character. She seems to us either never to have attempted to portray such an exceptional being or to have failed in doing so. No sketch of hers seems to us so shadowy, so unrememberable, as that of the ideal Jew who is supposed to be the most impressive person in the fiction where he figures, and next in dimness and lifelessness we should place that portrait which ought to have occupied the very focus of her artistic power—Savonarola. The world, perhaps, has not lost so much by her failure to carry out a plan once named to the writer—to give the world an ideal portrait of an actual character in history, whom she did not name, but to whom she alluded as an object of possible reverence unmingled with disappointment—as by some possible successor of Mrs. Poyser or Caleb Garth. The sketch of Zarca seems to us, it is true, one of her very finest creations, and unquestionably it is that of an exceptional and aspiring being. Still, her brightest colouring, on the whole, is kept for the simple homely beings who seek to get honestly through the day's work and make those they love happy. Her genius is always most characteristically exercised in discovering the pathos and grandeur that lie hid in average humanity. The writer once felt vividly how, even among her peers, what she most valued was that which they shared with average humanity, on hearing her say of one of her few contemporaries whose genius excelled her own—'*I always think of him as the husband of the dead wife.*' The distinction of eminent powers paled in her eyes before that of a faithful love—

profound, indeed, and deathless, but not in this respect superior to many a one that lurks behind the curtain of utter dumbness, or even of trite words and humdrum reflections. In many ways the speech recurs as especially characteristic of her, but most of all for the precedence which it gives the ordinary human bonds beyond all that is given to the *élite* of mankind. We can recall no other writer who, with the needful power, has taken so little pains to depict the life of genius. Both the sister spirits we should place by her side, for instance, have spent their most elaborate efforts in depicting a woman of genius, but Aurora Leigh and Consuelo have no pendant in the gallery of George Eliot (for the exquisite sketch of Armgart' seems to us too slight to be called one). We do not name this as any deficiency in her works; it seems to us, indeed, that art is not altogether a favourable subject for itself. But we note it neither for praise nor blame from a literary point of view, but as an important indication of the nature of her moral sympathies. They were rich and various, and no defining limits could be pointed out which would not probably suggest many exceptions; we have mentioned one, but on the whole they appear to us to embody all that is best, all that is pure, in the ideal of Democracy.

We pay a great tribute to any writer of such powers as hers, in saying that her teaching impresses on the mind the excellence of patient work, of simple duty, of cheerful unselfishness. So great that we can allow that she failed to inspire equal sympathy with aspiration, that she painted reverence—sometimes consciously and sometimes, it seems to us, without intending it—as generally mistaken, and still feel our debt of gratitude to her immense. In a world where restless vanity is so active, and where we are all, more or less, tempted into the scramble for pre-eminence, we owe much to one who taught us, in unforgettable words, to prize the lowly path of obscure duty. In words, we are obliged to say, for, in recalling her life, the recollection of what looks like a claim either to exceptional immunity from the laws that bind ordinary human beings, or else to an ex-



ceptional right to form a judgment on their scope, forces itself on the memory. But no plodding moralist could have more abhorred such a claim than she did. On one occasion she expressed, almost with indignation, her sense of the evil of a doctrine which compounded for moral deficiency in consideration of intellectual wealth, and her hearer failed to make her concede even that amount of truth in it, which surely no deliberate view of human difficulties and limitations could ultimately withhold, and which seems to us illustrated by her own life. She was no doubt responsible for the fact that English public opinion, in its idolatry of her, left in abeyance some of its most cherished principles; but her reverence for human bonds and her abhorrence of a self-pleasing choice as against a dutiful loyalty have been set forth with such eloquent conviction and varied force of illustration in her books that we believe the testimony has outweighed even the counteraction of what was adverse to it in her own career. She was one of the few whose words are mightier than their actions.

And how much in her demeanour, her personal aspect, repeated the lesson of her books! Not quite all, but almost all that one memory, at all events, can gather up from the past. From one point of view, she appeared as the humblest of human beings. 'Do not, pray, think that I would dream of comparing myself to ——,' she once said, with unquestionable earnestness, mentioning an author whom most people would consider as infinitely her inferior. And the slow, careful articulation and low voice suggested, at times, something almost like diffidence. Nevertheless, mingled with this diffidence was a great consciousness of power, and one sometimes felt with her as if in the presence of royalty, while of course there were moments when one felt that exalted genius has some temptations in common with exalted rank. But they were only moments. How strong was the current of her sympathy in the direction of all humble effort, how reluctantly she checked presumption! Possibly she may sometimes have had to reproach herself with failing to check it. Surely the most ordinary and

uninteresting of her friends must feel that had they known nothing of her but her rapid insight into and quick response to their inmost feelings she would still have been a memorable personality to them. This sympathy was extended to the sorrows most unlike anything she could ever by any possibility have known—the failures of life obtained as large a share of her compassion as its sorrows. A writer in the *Spectator* has noted, as a sign of the greatness of her dramatic genius, that she portrayed the characters most unlike her own, with the utmost intellectual sympathy. We should hardly have singled out this power for special notice—it surely takes the minimum of dramatic power to bring out the enjoyment that all feel in characters unlike their own—but certainly the remark sets one on the trace of what was felt remarkable in personal intercourse with her. It was not only those whose experience contained some germ of instruction for the dramatic painter who felt the full glow of her sympathy. It was granted in unstinted measure to those who could not give in return even the contribution by which an imagination is enriched. Doubtless she was beset by many appeals for encouragement and guidance, and her response was necessarily brief. But it was not contemptuous or impatient, even where it must have been reluctant. Her inherent respect for average humanity made itself felt, perhaps somewhat exaggerated, where it was the only respect she could feel. Few know how much is meant in saying this. There are not many from whom we could bear the humiliation of confronting mere respect for the humanity in each one of us, apart from all that is personal. We say almost as much of her heart as has ever been said of her genius when we say that this was possible with her.

Her aspirations to become a permanent source of joy and peace to mankind have been set forth in lines which, although they seem to us rather fine rhetoric than poetry, have already become almost classic. The wish to console and cheer was indeed rooted in the most vital part of her nature. The writer remembers her asking a



person whose society gave her no pleasure, and who was not unlikely to have abused the position thus accorded, to come to her at any time that her society might be felt as consolatory, at a time of trouble. It was about the same time that she spoke of the sense of a load of possible achievement threatened by the shortening span of life with a deep sadness which, in recalling the conversation, seems like a prophecy. Any one who knows the wonderful unselfishness in the offer will feel that we could hardly give a more convincing example of her strong impulse towards 'binding up the broken in heart.' And yet none of these recollections recurs to the present writer with such a rush of pathos as a few words that any one might have spoken, describing what she felt in disregarding an appeal for alms in the street. She was much distressed, and (if the writer may judge from very slight indications) much surprised to hear her works called depressing. She almost invariably, we believe, avoided reading any notices of them; but her rule could not have been quite invariable, for we recall a quaint and pathetic little outburst of disappointment that the result of perusing her works should produce on some critic or other 'a tendency towards black despair' (or some such expression, which, if our memory serves, she quoted with a touch of humorous exaggeration). Perhaps we shall appear merely to echo the judgment of this critic when we give it as a record of the impression she produced that one of the greatest duties of life was that of resignation. Nothing in the intercourse here recalled was more impressive, as exhibiting the power of feelings to survive the convictions which gave them birth, than the earnestness with which she dwelt on this as the great and real remedy for all the ills of life. One instance in which she appeared to apply it to herself, in speaking of the short span of life that lay before her, and the large amount of achievement that must be laid aside as impossible to compress into it, has been mentioned—and the sad, gentle tones in which the word *resignation* was on that occasion uttered, still vibrate on the ear. Strange that it should be thought possible to

transfer all that belongs to allegiance to the Will that ordains our fate except a belief in the existence of such a Will! Still more wonderful that the imagination of genius did actually achieve this transference to some extent. The prudent husbandry of desire, the self-control that guards all openings for the escape of that moral energy which wastes itself in regret, may be as complete as the obedience of spirit that bows before a holy Will. We believe, indeed, that this acceptance of the inevitable may be far more complete than resignation, for it is hard to creatures such as we are to conceive of Will that is at once loving and inexorable; but to call these two things by the same name because they both prevent useless wishes, seems to us as irrational as it would be to confuse frost and fire because they are both foes to moisture. We regret the attempts made by some of the admirers of this noble woman to conceal, from themselves or others, the vacuum at the centre of her faith. There is this excuse for such confusion, that her works, more than any others of our day, though it is true of so many, embody the morality that centres in the faith of Christ, apart from this centre. She once said to the writer that in conversation with the narrowest and least cultivated Evangelical she could feel more sympathy than divergence; and it was impossible to doubt the fulness of meaning in her words. But there is no reason that those who revered her should try to veil or dilute her convictions. She made no secret of them, though the glow of feelings, always hitherto associated with their opposites, may have confused their outline to many of her disciples. She was, we believe, the greatest opponent to all belief in the true source of strength and elevation for the lowly that literature ever elicited, but among the multitude of her admirers there were many (as a critic in the *Edinburgh Review* has well shown) who never penetrated into the region where this opposition was manifest, and there was nothing wanting to her appreciation of the faith of the humble and the poor but a sense of its reasonableness. At least that was her account of the matter, and doubtless it was as



true of her as it is of any one. 'Deism,' she once said, 'seems to me the most incoherent of all systems, but to Christianity I feel no objection but its want of evidence.' Doubtless the writer who conveyed to so many unthinking minds the poetic beauty that lies in the faith of a Dinah impressed on one here and there the force which was transmitted by her glowing sympathies, and to which her keen intellect was an absolute non-conductor. But it is idle, and worse than idle, it is pernicious, to confuse sympathy with conviction. This is the temptation of genius; let it be left to those who take the gain with the loss. And let it not be thought that those who honestly mistake the sympathies for the convictions which they seem to imply are therefore sheltered from the influence of those convictions which they do imply. As water must carry with it whatever it holds in solution, so must influence.

To the present writer this influence appears to tell on her art. She sympathises with the love of man to man, we should say, in proportion as it is unlike the love of man to God. There was much in her writings—there must be much in the utterance of all lofty and imaginative spirits—which tells against this description. In the relation of the human spirit to the Father of spirits lies hid the germ of every human relation; there is none which does not, dimly and feebly, foreshadow that which lies at the root of all. And least inadequately, least vaguely, is this foreshadowed in that love which gathers up the whole being—that love which, while it is felt in some sense by the whole animal creation, is yet that which, in its highest form, most opens to man the true meaning of a spiritual world. The love of man to woman, and woman to man, is the one profound and agitating emotion which is known to ordinary human hearts, and its portraiture, therefore, attempted by a thousand ineffectual chroniclers, is the most trite and commonplace of all themes of fiction. But when a writer arises who can hold up a mirror to this part of our being, he or she opens to us something of the infinite; for the most shallow and *borné* nature, so far as it has partaken in this great

human experience, has a window whence it may gaze towards all that is eternal. And it must always seem false to speak of one who has the power of recalling an emotion in which man is lifted above and beyond the limits of his individual being as wanting in sympathy with that impulse which lifts him above those limits most completely. This reservation we would make most fully, but the very gradation of interest in George Eliot's painting of human love seems to us explained and completed by that vacuum which it surrounds. There is no grade of this emotion that she has not touched more or less slightly—the strange stirrings of heart at a first glimpse of the goal; the wondrous sudden flooding of life with joy that comes of its certainty; the quiet conjugal repose of two hearts that have added long familiarity to the first vivid love without dimming it; the irresistible rush of a guilty passion and the strange delights that are hidden in its horror—all these she has so painted that her imagination has interpreted to many a loving heart its own experience. But we think most of her readers will agree with us in the conclusion that, with few exceptions, human love is interesting in her pages in inverse proportion as it bears the impress of what is divine. We linger over the relation between a heartless and shallow girl and an enthusiastic student of science whose life she spoils, with absorbing interest, and we yawn over the courtship of a shadowy hero and heroine who seem each to have been intended as a type of all that is worthy of reverence. We are riveted by the description of a wife's anguish as she recognises the false heart behind the fair face:—the cold heart behind the polished suavity of demeanour, but we find the love of the graceful maiden for the virtuous Radical not greatly above the level of ordinary circulating library interest. Almost always where love looks *downwards*, whether for good or for evil, her power is at its highest. Where it looks upwards, with few exceptions, her power seems to ebb, and sometimes (so we at least feel in the love of Deronda and Myra) altogether to depart. With few exceptions we have said; we mean in fact with one exception, but that is certainly a significant one. If



there is an emotion which brings the heart into close neighbourhood with that region where man finds intercourse with God, it is that which unites man and woman by a love that lacks nothing of passion but its exclusiveness. This love is a commoner thing than is supposed, but its delineation is rarer, we believe, than itself, and two passages in George Eliot's novels contain more adequate suggestion of what some have found the most elevating of human communion than we know in the whole of fiction besides. One of these is the description of the last conversation between Gwendoline and Deronda, the other is the intercourse between the broken-hearted heroine and the consumptive clergyman, in *Janet's Repentance*. Still on the whole we may say (and even these pictures are not altogether exceptions to the rule) that something of mistake mixes in most upward-looking devotion as George Eliot paints it. That devotion of which all such is a feeble prophecy and type, must therefore take the very centre and focus of error.

Must one who feels this severance of love of man from faith in God, the great misfortune of our time, yet allow that the thing that is left acquires, for the moment, a sudden influx of new energy by the very fact of its severance? It would not be looking facts fairly in the face to deny that the genius of George Eliot seems to show such a result. Nor is there any real difficulty in making the concession. A bud may open more quickly in water in a warm room than on its parent stem, although thus the seed will never ripen. We may transfer conviction to a more genial atmosphere at the very moment we sever it from its root, and we must wait long to discover that the life that is quickened in it is also threatened. The love of God has often seemed opposed to the love of man. There is no love that may not oppose any or every other for a time. We all see conjugal set itself against filial affection; a new passion drain off the energy from old and familiar attachments. Such of us as are wise are prepared for the inevitable loss in all change, even if the change is gain on the whole; such of us as are schooled by long experience know that the loss is only temporary—

‘The love of one, from which there doth not spring  
The love of all, is but a worthless thing,’

sang the only Englishwoman who could be compared to George Eliot in genius, and who in the love of which she sings was more fortunate. The mother who bends over the cradle for the first time feels all other love chilled for the moment by the sudden rush towards this mighty magnet, but the seed of a deeper love than she has ever yet known for those who bent over hers lies hid in that which seems to crush it. But a seed takes long to develop. What we feel most at the moment, perhaps—at all events if we are the losers by it—is the ‘expulsive power of a new affection.’ And conversely what may be most apparent *at the moment* that faith in God expires may be the sudden release of a mystic fervour which has all to be employed in the service of man. This, we believe, is what was felt, oftenest unconsciously, in the writings of George Eliot. ‘What I look to,’ she once said, ‘is a time when the impulse to help our fellows shall be as immediate and as irresistible as that which I feel to grasp something firm if I am falling’; and the eloquent gesture with which she grasped the mantelpiece as she spoke, remains in the memory as the expression of a sort of transmuted prayer. And now the look and the tones recur not only as one of the most valued passages in a valued chapter of memory, but as a sort of gathering up, in a noble but mutilated aspiration, of the ideal given by a lofty genius to the world. What the many felt in her writings was the glow of this desire, what they missed was its mutilation. We have often wished that the latter had been more distinct. Her detaching influence from the true anchorage of humanity would have been less potent, we think, had it been received consciously. There was no lack of distinctness in it, at all events, to her hearers. Perhaps there may be some to whom these works have brought nothing but the glow of an emotion to which their own mind supplied the hidden belief which to them could alone justify it. But on the whole we cannot doubt that her convictions cut through this sheath of emotion, and made their keen edge felt on many a mind and many a heart.



Can genius be indeed the barren and desolate eminence which we must consider it if they alone to whom it is granted have no object for reverence? Can it be that the ordinary mass of average mankind—the stupid, animal, indolent crowd—have exercise for this elevating faculty whenever they lift their eyes, and that all who soar into a purer region must look downward when they would find anything to love? We know well how George Eliot would have answered the question with her lips. But with her life, and still more in her death, she gives us a different answer. They who occupy the mountain peaks of human thought may preach to us that these mountain peaks are all, and then, in their potent imagination, make the immensity of the plain below a substitute for the superior heights that they alone lack. But all our instincts tell us that goodness and power would become misfortunes if they lifted man into a region where he had nothing above him. The bereavement which we feel as one and another depart from us cannot be the abiding portion of those who have enriched their kind. ‘Fame promises in gold and pays in silver,’ said George Eliot once to the present writer. Not fame alone, but that lofty hope, that inspirer of ardent effort, which confers the power to despise fame—though it often also confers fame itself—would, if we must accept some parts of her creed, have promised in gold and paid in lead.

But we cannot bid her farewell with words of divergence. She has quickened life as much as any of those who have rendered it more turbid; she has purified it as much as many who have arrested or slackened its flow. It is a solemn thought that such an one has passed away—so solemn that the debt of a large individual gratitude seems to disappear in the common emotion which it but intensifies and typifies. Her death unites us as her life did, perhaps even more, for we listened to her voice with various feelings, and there is only one with which we learn that it has ceased for ever.

## JOHN RUSKIN

THE name of John Ruskin recalls phases of intellectual activity so diverse, even so heterogeneous, that many of those who pronounce it with a common admiration may be said to be thinking of different men. To express any judgment as to the relative merits of these men—to decide between the claims of the art-critic and the social reformer on the gratitude of their kind—may be rather to communicate information about oneself than to contribute towards a judgment of one in whom, through all these varied aspects of his personality, we must reverence lofty ideals, untiring industry, and disinterested devotion to his fellow-men. The opinion, here avowed, that the earliest phase of his genius was its brightest, may be partly due to the fact that the glow of its emergence blends with that of a far-off youth. When Ruskin speaks of Nature and Art, he seems to me inspired. When he turns to finance, to politics, to the social arrangements and legislative enactments of mankind, I can recognise neither sober judgment, nor profound conviction. Every one must regret such an incapacity. It is a natural instinct which desires to find in the recorded results of every life an exhibition of increasingly fertile activity; it is perplexing and disappointing to have to recognise, without discerning any infidelity to a lofty aim, that the later date points to the lower stage. But the fact, we cannot doubt, is common. Much earnest and patient labour seems fruitless, much rich outpouring is unpreluded by any such labour; the race is not always to the swift, the battle to the strong. Whether the benefactors of mankind have given their harvest early or late is a question full of interest for the biographer, by no means devoid of interest



for the historian; its answer teaches much that concerns our knowledge of the course of evolution and the relation of epoch to epoch. But when we come to consider the value of the work, and the rank of the workers, it tells us little or nothing. If the work of the eleventh hour may be worth that of the whole day, so may that of the first hour. Let it not be thought, therefore, that an attempt to estimate the genius and character of a great man removed from us in the fulness of years must aim at minimising his fame because it is focussed on the first portion of his intellectual activity.

The world on which the genius of John Ruskin first flashed was very different from the world of to-day. When the work of the Oxford Graduate first roused vehement disapproval and passionate admiration, no single name was before the public which has any special interest for our own time. We had never heard of George Eliot or George Meredith, of Herbert Spencer or Matthew Arnold; we knew Charles Darwin as the writer of an interesting book of travels, and Alfred Tennyson as a singer of a few graceful lyrics. The name of Comte was so unfamiliar that I remember a young man fresh from college, not at all stupid, informing his cousins that it was the French way of writing and pronouncing Kant. We knew nothing of Evolution beyond what we gleaned from the *Vestiges of Creation*, and any question as to the origin of species would have been associated by us with the first chapters of Genesis. The popular art of the day was pretty, sentimental, conventional; popular fiction was decorous, heresy was timid, orthodoxy was secure. Science was rather a respectable comrade of literature than the omnipotent dogmatist and legislator we know to-day. It seems in looking back as if nothing was the same then as now, except that which is the same always.

This describes the world in which Ruskin wrote and published *Modern Painters*. But the middle of the century inaugurated a vast change. The stir of '48 was in the air when first we learned to associate the name of John Ruskin with the heavy green volume—so characteristic

in its disregard of the reader's convenience—which was rousing such glowing enthusiasm and provoking such fierce indignation that the shape of clouds and the proportion of the branch to the tree became subjects almost as dangerous as the Gorham controversy. The year of revolution seems a natural time for the emergence of his genius into fame. The vague, vivid hopes of that era blend well, at least in retrospect, with the new ideas he infused into the current of thought, although he had not himself any sympathy with the coming change. The most active foe of one good thing is generally another good thing, and Ruskin's sympathies were diverted from the uprising of the nations perhaps by some refraction from that sympathy with classes<sup>1</sup> which always opposes sympathy with nations; and which was, no doubt, a strong tendency with him before it became a dominant impulse. At any rate, the reproach sometimes addressed to literary genius, of a want of sympathy with national life, was not wholly undeserved by him. But it was true of him only as it may have seemed true of Jeremiah. In his genius there was a strong revolutionary element, and it is difficult in looking back not to melt it in with the other revolutionary manifestations of the time. From the first it was as a prophet he addressed the world; it was the ring of hortatory earnestness in denunciation or appeal which gave so vivid an originality to dissertations on matters previously associated with mere dilettantism. The tone of the pulpit, enforcing the teaching of the artist, was something wonderfully entrancing to a generation knowing that kind of earnestness only in connection with religion; and his teaching gathered up much of the attention which was then withdrawing itself from the ebbing tide of the High Church revival. He influenced many who hated or despised the High Church revival: some voices sound in my ear, as I write, which seem to protest against a judgment either obliterating from recollection a whole-hearted and characteristic admiration, or else associating it with a dis-

<sup>1</sup> I need hardly inform any reader that the barbarous and confusing antithesis of 'classes and masses' has no bearing here. The masses *are* classes. I am opposing the stratification of the civilised world to the organic unity of a nation.



cipleship the unseen speakers never approached near enough to repudiate. As I listen to them, and follow them till their vanishing out of sight, it seems hard to retain my conviction that the life of Ruskin stood in any relation to a great Church movement. And yet it does seem to me that the enthusiasm with which we welcomed the first wonderful volume would have been something different if it had come before the *Tracts for the Times*, and all that they suggest and imply. How much they suggest and imply which their authors would never have accepted as standing towards them in any relation whatever! How many a great man would draw back in astonishment if he were shown his spiritual heir! I believe that John Ruskin was, in some sense, the heir of John Newman. The successor would have recognised the legacy as little as the testator; still, it remains that we, looking back upon both across the chasm of revolutionary years, may recognise a common element in their teaching, a common spirit in their learners, a certain analogy in the result. But such a suggestion needs a brief excursion beyond its immediate limits.

The spiritual life of the past was bound up with the conception of authority—that is, of visible authority, of guides discernible to mortal eyes in the flesh, or present in the writings which were a solid guarantee for their decision. The men who revered the Church and the men who revered the Bible have set the keynote of what religion we have known in the first two millenniums of Christianity. The dominion of an infallible Church was split up 500 years ago by those who asserted the dominion of an infallible book; our own time has recognised the analogy between the two claims, and setting both on one level has prepared the way for a conception including all that is true in both, or else for a blank denial of any important subject-matter represented by either. The worshippers of the book and the worshippers of the Church have sometimes united their forces against their common foes, but the union is transient, the antagonism has been perennial. Seventy years ago the claims of the Church, after a long slumber, began to revive. It was, to

many minds, like a breath of spring. The first stirrings of a new belief that an institution visible among men was not merely a commemoration of what had passed away and a promise of what was to come, but an actual fountain of power and life—this came as a wonderful revival of much besides personal religion. It is still commemorated in beautiful buildings, in some true poetry, in much interesting fiction; it marks an era in art and literature, and encircles the memories of that time like an atmosphere, colouring what it did not mould. I possess a copy of the *Christian Year* which bears sympathetic pencillings from William Wilberforce; in a contemporary copy of the *Lyra Apostolica* I find initials recalling a much wider divergence from High Church doctrine even than his. It is almost as surprising to trace the hostility as the sympathy which it aroused. The vehement protests against 'Newmanism' contained in the letters of Dr. Arnold, for instance, strike one, at the present hour, as betraying a strange ignorance of issues so close at hand when he wrote—issues beside which his divergence from John Newman seems a small thing. It was a movement swaying more or less the spirits of men who opposed, repudiated, or even ignored it. But the ebb was rapid, and the strength of the current was soon forgotten.

When Ruskin first became famous the current was already slackening. Its Romeward tendencies were clearly recognised; its greatest teacher had openly joined that Church, and many were following him. The Broad Church, though not so named till much later, was beginning to be felt as a stirring of vague heretical tendencies, attractive to what then seemed audacious thought. There was a kind of blank in the world which Ruskin was eminently adapted to fill. He was, we may say, Catholic and Protestant at once. He has told us in his deeply interesting fragments of autobiography that his mother made him learn the Bible by heart, and has actually expressed his gratitude to her for the discipline. His Scotch blood somehow benefited by a process which might, one would think, have resulted in making him loathe the deepest poetry in the world's literature. The Bible has passed



into his heart, his imagination, not less effectively than into his memory; so far he is a Scotchman and a Protestant. But he could not be a Protestant in an exclusive sense. We cannot indeed say that his writings are untouched by this narrow Protestantism: his criticism of Raphael's well-known cartoon of the giving of the keys to Peter seems to me even a grotesque instance of it. To blame a great Church painter for translating into pictorial record the symbolism of the command 'Feed my sheep,' instead of reproducing with careful accuracy the details of a chapter of St. John he may never have read—this we must confess to be a strange aberration of genius into something like stupidity. It is so far characteristic that it expresses Ruskin's hatred of the Renaissance; but it leads the reader who seeks to understand his real bent of sympathy astray. The spirit of the Renaissance was equally hostile to Catholicism and Protestantism. Ruskin, by birth and breeding a child of stern Scotch Protestantism, was by the necessities of his art-life an exponent of that which is enduring in the influence of the Catholic Church. For what has given enduring power to Rome, in spite of her association in the past with all that is foul and all that is cruel, is her hold on the vast, deep, lofty revelation that what we see and what we handle is not only an object for sight and touch, but a language unfolding to us the reality of that which eye hath not seen and shall not see. This truth, known in ecclesiastical dialect as the Real Presence, however contemptuously ignored or passionately denied in that particular form, is one that will never lose its hold upon the hearts of men; the Church which bears witness to it survives crimes and follies, and manifests in every age its possession of something for which the world consciously or unconsciously never ceases to yearn. 'To them that are without, these things are done in parables,' is, in some form, the message of almost every great spiritual teacher; it has never been set forth more eloquently than by Ruskin. Sometimes his love of symbolism passes into extravagance. One of the later volumes of *Modern Painters* contains a passage, for instance, on the symbolism of the colour scarlet, against which a pencil that

was hardly ever permitted such license, left a mark of exclamation expressing, I will venture to say, the judgment of every sane reader. And though we rarely come upon anything in him that is merely extravagant, we often find it very difficult to go along with his pictorial interpretations. The student who takes with him to the contemplation of any great picture some description from the pen of the great critic is often bewildered in the endeavour to apply it to what he sees before his eyes. Every one must have felt this, I think, in the case which he chooses as the typical example of imagination—Tintoret's great picture at Venice of the Crucifixion. As we make out the figure of the ass behind the Cross, feeding on withered palm trees, in which Ruskin has taught us to see a mournful judgment on the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we cannot but ask ourselves—How much did the critic find, and how much did he bring? It is pathetic to remember that he was himself at times conscious of the doubt. 'I wonder how much Shakespeare really meant of all that,' he once said to a friend, after listening to a lecture on Shakespeare. 'I suppose at any rate he meant more than we can follow, and not less,' said his friend—Frederick Maurice. 'Well, that is what I used to think of Turner,' he replied sadly, 'and now I don't know.' I give the reminiscence as illustrating the fluctuating revelations of the prophet, his temptation to doubt the revelation, not as an index to the bent of his true thought. Inspiration and doubt are as substance and shadow; we might almost venture to say that a man must know neither or both. He who has never doubted the revelation has never, in the true sense of the word, believed it. But the message was in the revelation, not the doubt.

Those haunting voices, which come back as I write, seem again to bring their protest against any association of the lesson of Ruskin with mystic truth. 'What we cared for in his teaching,' I hear them say, 'was not hidden meaning or mystery: it was an escape from all that. He taught us to see things. He opened our eyes to discern what was before us. The waves had danced and broken on the shore, the clouds had woven gold and silver draperies



over our head, and we had looked at them, but when Ruskin anointed our eyes with his euphrasy and rue we discovered that we had never previously seen them. To see the beautiful world is enough; an excursion into that region would be only embarrassed by this heavy baggage of symbolism.' The protest embodies the recollections of hundreds, perhaps thousands—my own among them. How vividly across the mist of years I recall first reading his description of a wave. The waves, as I read, broke around me on rocks and sand I had known from childhood, yet my feeling was one of perplexity. 'What can this and that mean—overhanging lips, lacework, etc.—I have often seen waves and never all that!' It was like reading it in a foreign tongue. Then I looked at the waves, and discovered that never before had I seen one. Perhaps even more have felt this in looking at the clouds; for no spot of earth shuts us off from testing the truth of his description of them. Ruskin did for every reader what spectacles do for a short-sighted person. Where we saw a vague blur he gave definite form and distinct colour. He did not necessarily pass on a message from the breaking wave and the melting cloud, but he could not have passed on the outward image if to him it had not been much more than an image. It would not have been sight to his readers if to him it had not been thought.

Perhaps I may make my meaning clearer by comparing him with a great poet. Wordsworth saw in Nature the same kind of reflection and interpretation of the moral life of Man as Ruskin saw in Art. He brought Wordsworth's ideas afresh to the mind of men, dyed with fresh splendour and purified from their clogging accretions. Eloquence is not subject to the invasions of the prosaic in the same way that verse is, and is also more welcome to an average intelligence. To translate poetry into eloquence is, for the time at all events, to give its meaning a wider audience. One who reads the lines on Peel Castle, on revisiting the Wye, the sonnet beginning 'Hail, Twilight,' and one or two others, and then turns to many passages in *Modern Painters*, may test the effect of such a translation. Both writers bring home to the mind

of the reader that he who sees only outward things sees these incompletely. If Ruskin were remembered only as one who had taught us to look at the outward face of Nature, we should have incurred a deep debt of gratitude to him, but he could not have done that if he had done nothing else. He could not have unveiled the beauty of earth and sky unless to him beauty had been also language. If to many of those who were most moved by his glowing words it remained mere beauty, it was much to them because it was more to him. The message of a teacher, as it lives in the mind of a learner, is necessarily incomplete. If it is to be a vital growth it must be also a fragment.

In calling Ruskin the heir rather of Newman than of Wordsworth, and yet considering his teaching mainly a rendering in eloquence of Wordsworth's poetry, I have tried to mark the effect of his personality. What we mean by personal influence is difficult to define; in some sense all influence must be personal; and if it be taken as implying an impressive personality it could not be applied to him. When he first became a familiar figure in London drawing-rooms as a young man, I fancy the effect on the ardent admirers of his book was disappointing. The general impression, as far as I can recall it after fifty years, was somewhat pallid, somewhat ineffective. There was nothing in the unsubstantial, but not graceful, figure, the aquiline face, the pale tone of colouring, the slight lisp, to suggest a prophet. I recall these faint echoes from my girlhood, because in their very insignificance they bring out what I mean by the personal element in his influence. The impression of such a personality as John Newman's, for instance (whom I never saw), might have created a glamour concealing the influence of soul on soul. There was no glamour about Mr. Ruskin. I dare say anything which might be so described was at its lowest when he was seen against the background of 'Society,' as he never was after the beginning of his fame. But there could never have been much of it at any time. And yet the element of a personality was as much in his influence as in John Newman's. We judge him imperfectly from his



books. He was a fountain of actual, living influence. When I recall the few times of meeting him I have a sense of coming nearer to a human spirit than in recalling the sight of other remarkable men, a sense I could not justify by any words he spoke, even if I could quote them. There was something in him forthcoming, trustful, human. The occasion on which I felt this most was once at the National Gallery, where I was copying a picture, and he came to look at my attempt. He cannot have praised it, or I should remember what he said, but I remember feeling almost embarrassed by the wonderful respectfulness in his attention. It was not that he was a distinguished man and I a girl producing a mediocre daub—we were, for the time, two students of Turner standing side by side before a great work. And again I felt this, the last time I ever saw him. It was in his drawing-room at Denmark Hill; years had passed and everything was changed. I suppose it was at the saddest time of his life. ‘The world looks black to me,’ is the only speech I remember, and I do not remember the words accurately, but they give an impression from that visit of which I am certain. It happened to be a very inconvenient visit to him: he had written to beg me and a friend to defer it, and some mistake about his letter brought him his undesired guests in spite of it, but he showed us his Turners as graciously as if he had been longing to see us, and I felt again how wonderfully he accepted any love of Art as an equal platform where we might communicate without any looking up or down. I recall the sad wondering expression in his eyes as they met mine, with a wonderful sense of pathos; it was like looking into the face of a child. And again I felt that contact with an unshrinking humanity which makes up, surely, a large part of the reminiscence of all his acquaintance. Perhaps I seem to describe a quite ordinary quality in using those words, yet in truth it is very rare. The sense of contact with a human spirit, a real meeting—as distinguished from a passing recognition—is, with most persons, a distinction stamped with preference. It must be a part of the recollection of all personal dealing with him, even when it was not all genial.

I remember, about the same time as my National Gallery interview, a beautiful girl speaking with impatience of his 'affected humility,' and the remark of a hearer that one would be glad of a little even affected humility in him. The two remarks recur with reference to a quality which was, I am sure, deeply sincere, but which no doubt seemed heterogeneous with much else in him. It was mainly those who knew him through his books who thought him conceited. Whatever they may have had to complain of, it was not anything that had a touch of condescension. Whatever they may have missed, it was not the open door of an hospitable mind.

I should sum up the impressions I have tried to revive in saying that Ruskin seemed to me to gather up all that was best in spiritual democracy. Of what may be called his democracy in a more exact sense I have confessed that I have nothing to say. In spite of some weighty testimony, I cannot regard it as even a very strong influence, from him on his time; it seems to me rather the vivid expression of a strong influence upon him from others. But it sprang from that central core of his teaching, his belief in beauty as a Divine Sacrament. For this belief involves the conviction that this table of the Lord must be open to all. From that feast none must be shut out. And the discovery that whole classes are shut out, that the bulk of the world's workers cannot see the beauty of a tree or a flower, because sordid cares and physical wretchedness weave an opaque veil before their eyes—this discovery made Ruskin a Socialist. Why, he seemed always saying, should a message, in its nature universal, be silenced by luxury on the one hand as much as by penury on the other? The feverish hunt for wealth curtains off the influence of Nature almost as much as the desperate struggle with poverty, while the commercial development which creates a few millionaires and a mass of overdriven workers (so he reasoned) creates also a hideous world. He longed to spread the truly human life. He hated the phase of civilisation which cut off, as he thought, from whole classes of men the power to drink in the message of Nature and of Art. Those of his writings



which deal with this subject fail to exhibit to my eyes the grace and force which belong to his earlier period. But their true spirit of brotherhood must be acknowledged by all.

Ruskin must always have been singularly open to influence from other minds. I remember well his meeting F. D. Maurice at my father's house, soon after the publication of his *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*, a little theological pamphlet which, according to a story told and probably invented at the time, was bought by a farmer who thought its title an index to its contents. Mr. Maurice was made very indignant by some passage in it which suggested a stricter fencing of the Christian life from the invasion of sinners. 'Mr. Ruskin ought to do penance in a white sheet for such a doctrine,' he said, in a letter to a common friend. The letter was shown to Ruskin and drew from him a beautifully candid and simple request for explanation, unaccompanied by an angry word. Mr. Maurice was profoundly touched, and the little correspondence brought out from those two noble souls a music that lingers in my ears as does hardly any other utterance of either. 'Mine is a dark faith,' Ruskin wrote, with a full readiness to be enlightened by one who had applied such severe words to his utterance. It might certainly be said that one who felt his own a dark faith had better not try to enlighten others, but I think the candour and humility of his willingness, under those circumstances, to be enlightened are much more rare and much more valuable than a modest caution in advancing opinions which had afterwards to be withdrawn. He lived his faith, whatever it was, as fully as ever did a human being. I have said that those who admire him are sometimes thinking of different men, but that dual personality of which most of us are so mournfully conscious both within and without—the seeker after lofty truth, and the compromiser with what is low and narrow—of this he knew nothing. He was true to his aspirations; they may not always have been either wise or consistent, but they were always one with his life. A teacher can hardly have a nobler epitaph.

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## LAURENCE OLIPHANT

THAT the memoir of Laurence Oliphant, by his namesake and distant cousin,<sup>1</sup> should be by this time in its seventh edition, would have been a safe prediction by any one who knew the date of the work. Few points of interest by which any biography can claim general attention were wanting to the character and career of its subject; a far less brilliant personality would attract notice if it were set forth by the pen of its author. The life it depicts touches on some of the deepest problems of humanity, and covers many of its superficial attractions; it records a renunciation that witnesses to a perennial yearning towards the highest; it also presents the reader with pictures of important and varied activity, intercourse with persons of consequence, a share in diplomatic and political achievement, and an aroma of what is called 'good society.' Perhaps even these combined attractions are less important in a literary work than the literary skill with which they are here set forth. It would have been quite possible to write a dull biography of Laurence Oliphant. It is hardly possible for Mrs. Oliphant to write a biography or anything else that shall fail to be interesting.

In spite of advantages so numerous and so various it is impossible for the critic to pronounce the work satisfactory. To make a readable compendium of accessible information is to prepare, not to achieve, the work of the biographer. The confessions of arrested or divergent sympathies which meet us whenever we come to what is unlike other people in Laurence Oliphant give us a refreshing sense of candour and modesty, but prepare us

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of the Life of Laurence and Alice Oliphant.* By Margaret O. W. Oliphant. Blackwood. 1891.



for the incoherence we find. We are introduced to a brilliant, amiable, and interesting man, the friend of princes, the favourite of society, the hero of a series of adventures alike thrilling and dignified, who brings to a parliamentary career the endowments of eloquence, wit, wide and varied if somewhat superficial knowledge, and a large experience of affairs; and then, with a success so important and pregnant with noble possibilities just opening, turns away at the bidding of a crazy fanatic, and commits civil suicide at his behest. Mrs. Oliphant's representation is as bewildering as one which should trace the passage to the cloister of some votary of the world, omitting all mention, or at least all intelligent apprehension, of the faith which was the mainspring of that transition. The life, as she gives it, lacks the unity which lies at the core of every sane life—a unity the disturbance of which constitutes what we mean by insanity. That condition blends indeed with average experience far more intimately and mysteriously than legal and medical dialect would permit us to assume; but no one would erect a literary monument to the person in whose character it was a chief ingredient. Perhaps her failure may be the price paid for brilliant success elsewhere. The habit of describing imaginary character probably tends to conceal the fact that it is difficult to understand actual character; and the very truth that Oliphant's life was a romance made it a perilous thing for a writer of romance to undertake it. Where the habit of many years and the material of workmanship alike suggest fiction, it is very difficult, we should imagine, to bring to the task that laborious passivity which belongs to the effort to record and to interpret complex fact, and we cannot say that the difficulty is overcome here.

We confess that the portrait of Laurence Oliphant which is given in a representation avowedly fictitious seems to us in some respects more successful than his biographer's. *For God and Humanity*<sup>1</sup> is an ideal picture of her subject as he appeared in the close of his career to one whose interest in him evidently began just where hers

<sup>1</sup> *For God and Humanity*. By Haskett Smith, M.A. Blackwood. 1891.

left off, and the two books thus mutually supplement each other. The writer, an intimate friend of Laurence Oliphant, to whose *Scientific Religion* he has apparently supplied an interesting page, describes him under the name of Cyril Gordon, thus suggesting some resemblance to another character not less well known, whom the author must also have known, if he was present when General Gordon and Laurence Oliphant agreed that they were 'the two craziest fellows alive.' The account is woven in with many lively, and we should imagine trustworthy, sketches of life in Palestine, and with a story perhaps not very successfully incorporated with the rest of the book, but breathing the same pure and elevated atmosphere. This picture of a modern saint, though it is in some important particulars carefully made unlike its prototype, and though in its representation of an almost consistently high and pure character it appears to us also to depart from the reality, does yet reveal more that is important concerning the man we are trying to understand than an account of his whole life which passes over all that was most characteristic in it as a disastrous dream. The following extract shows that the account is not the work of a disciple who was unable to see any weak points in the character of Laurence Oliphant, though Mr. Haskett Smith has perhaps not observed those which we should ourselves have considered it most important to bring forward:

'She felt that, in some of the expressions and sentiments to which he gave utterance in his letters to her, there was breathing, all unconsciously to him, a spirit of uncharitableness and misconception as regarded the organisation of the Christian Church. She could easily understand it, seeing what sacrifices he had made on account of the errors and inconsistencies which he had seen rampant in the Church, and seeing what an isolated life he had been living for so many years. She knew that he would mourn bitterly over this failing, if he were made conscious of it; for it bordered on the most subtle of all forms of self, even spiritual pride. . . . He was so high-minded, so single-hearted in his aims and desires of following Christ, that it grieved her to the heart to think that



in his soul there should be lurking an element of self-righteousness, which was undermining the purity of his spiritual life.’<sup>1</sup>

There may be a touch of exaggeration in the estimate here implied; but the feeling which dictates it is of itself a tribute to the original of such a portrait.

We may describe the character of Laurence Oliphant in a fine rhetorical passage from Moore’s *Life of Sheridan* (if we reduce the scale of its reference). ‘Burke’s mind,’ says Moore, ‘lies parted in his works, like some vast continent separated by a convulsion of Nature, each portion peopled by its own giant race, differing altogether in feature and language, and committed in eternal hostility to one another.’ We have only to omit the suggestion of colossal power to apply these words to our present subject. On one side of his nature Oliphant was a man of the world, a seeker for adventures, a denizen of the clubs. On another he was an enthusiast, an ascetic, and a mystic. It is not uncommon, in religious biography, to find these two characters succeed each other in the same personality. But in following his career we never lose sight of either. The man of the world is always there, and so is the aspiring mystic. We nowhere feel the contrast more than in the last romance he ever wrote. Mrs. Oliphant’s expression of regret that it ever was written is a very mild version of what all must feel to whom the credit of its author is dear. Indeed, *Massollam*, the caricature of Thomas Lake Harris which his former disciple gave the world in 1886, is such an ignoble violation of the loyalty due to the memory of past kindness as we cannot without unfairness associate with a worldly standard; it is an outrage not less upon good taste and good breeding than it is an offence against the Christian standard of duty; nor is it necessary, in order to agree with this view, that any decision whatever should have been reached as to the matters at issue between the *ci-devant* master and disciple—the attack is treacherous and ignoble, whether or not the description be libellous. His warmest friends seem to feel the need of some apology, if we may judge from the statement of a critic<sup>2</sup> who ‘has good reason to know’ that

<sup>1</sup> *For God and Humanity*, iii. 30, 31. <sup>2</sup> *Blackwood’s Magazine*, July 1891, p. 19.

the character of Massollam is not intended for more than a representation of which Harris has suggested some features! As if any representation in fiction were ever more than that. Massollam is a vulgar charlatan, who never expresses an elevating thought, and cheats the hero of the piece out of many thousands of pounds. That is exactly what Laurence Oliphant has taught the world to think of the teacher to whom he declares he shall ever be grateful. And yet as we lay down the work, we feel that the writer is still ready to sacrifice all that he has if he may be the disciple of Christ. The paradox is less uncommon than deplorable. Those divine promptings which lift the soul towards the highest, when in any degree neglected, seem always to leave it more hopelessly a prey to low impulses than any worldly standard of good sense and decent honesty does. The discovery that a clear representation of spiritual truth may through its satisfying completeness deaden effort, and an ideal of perfection be substituted for a life of progress, is one of the bitterest disappointments of life, for it is possible only on the track of its purest hopes. But aspirations which have no appreciable influence on the conduct of every-day life may belong to a much deeper part of the nature than the errors which seem to defy them.

This duplex nature in Laurence Oliphant may be connected, to some extent, with the influences of his education. His parents, a devout and simple Scotch gentleman and lady (the latter a mere girl when he was born), belonged to an Evangelical phase of religious feeling; his father, we learn on the best authority, had as a young man frequented gay company, and 'got into the way of using bad words for want of something to say,' and then in his recoil from that early laxity felt an attraction towards any austere and simple piety, a delightful instance of which is given in the letter written to the little Laurence from Ceylon. His mother's tender anxiety for his spiritual welfare would seem to have evoked an eagerness to confess shortcomings and to open avenues of spiritual discussion, in which it is impossible not to trace a certain admixture of dramatic enjoyment. He was



evidently far too much of a spoiled child ever to have been really weighed down by anything coming from his parents; the boy who could tell his mother, 'Mamma, this is not the place for you,' when she tried to interfere with his tutor, and who startled his unsuspecting critics when they were pitying her, a pretty young woman, for having such a plain child, by protesting from his unseen corner that he had 'very expressive eyes,' must have breathed an atmosphere of fond indulgence always. But it is not only the things that are said and done to a child which make him what he is. It is quite as much the things that are taken for granted. The impression of youth which clings about him to the last makes it difficult to remember that when we go back to the days of his childhood we return to a vanished world. A child, building his house of bricks in the corner of a drawing-room during a morning call, is not now likely to overhear disparaging remarks about himself as he did at his uncle's country house; but he may listen to the most contradictory opinions on questions of which to hint a doubt in those days was, if not to rouse antagonism, at least to stir uneasy feelings and move a sense of bad taste and dangerous defiance to views stamped with the adherence of a great national decision. So completely has the wheel come round that, as Mrs. Oliphant remarks, in some circles it now requires the same kind of courage to profess a belief which in former days it required to profess a doubt. We have to remember this to understand his feeling towards orthodoxy. It is not on religious ground alone that people profess one thing and practise another. We see every day that a belief in equality may be just as much accepted in words and denied in deeds as a belief in the Athanasian Creed. But people did not see this in the days when Oliphant's character was formed, and religion seemed then the peculiar dominion of that unreality against which all his nature rose in abhorrence, while yet its deepest expression always found something in him that gave it a response.

We have to remember, moreover, in taking account of the influence of a bygone orthodoxy, that its badges, especially in Scotland, were very oppressive to the young.

We vividly recall the account given by a young foreign musician about the same age as Laurence Oliphant of the impression he produced, when staying at the house of a Scotch peer not particularly devoted to any religious party, by sitting down to the piano one Sunday morning while waiting for breakfast. Could we have reproduced our young friend's mimicry of the faces that appeared through doors opening 'in every direction' (so he assured us) of the inchoate costumes in which decorous gentlemen and ladies rushed to silence a few bars of Chopin, as if the dulcet strains were drunken orgies or cries for help, we should provide our readers with a cartoon that Leech or Du Maurier might envy! Our friend's Sunday afflictions were not over when he closed the piano with a frightened apology; but how much tenderness was woven in with these recollections was shown in the fact that he subsequently commemorated his affection for the family with whom he had endured so much in the name of one of his children. There is no sign, in the biography we are criticising, that its earlier portion might include any similar reminiscence to that which it has revived, but many passages in the works of Laurence Oliphant would be more significant, if we might assume that his youth also had felt the burden of Scotch orthodoxy, and also recalled something in it afterwards with tender and pathetic regret.

We pass to more certain and equally important ground when, quitting his early youth, we note that throughout his whole life he never really knew the meaning of the word home. Especially important, as a clue to much that is puzzling in his nature, is the fact that such approaches to a home as he did know were never on British soil. Ceylon in his boyhood, and Mount Carmel in the last years of his life, must have been the places he most associated with the word, and neither of these can have brought anything of that atmosphere which belongs to a man's domicile among his countrymen. A very small portion of his sixty years of life was spent in this island. Born at the Cape in 1829, and entering on a quasi-public life at nineteen as the secretary of his father, the chief-



justice of Ceylon ; substituting at his own choice a roving sojourn on the Continent for a university career, and starting for a hunting tour in India as the companion of a native prince, at the age when most young men are just settling down to the drudgery of a profession, he never experienced, in all its penetrating influence, that pressure of an inherited set of beliefs and claims, which does something to create a national character. Wherever he did come in contact with it, it was more or less as a foreigner, with just that keen observation of all that is faulty in it which belongs to all external observation. A man who spends his life on British soil even now, and still more in the past, has a set of influences always acting upon him which do tend to get a certain standard tried and tested. The discipline of a public school and of college, the pressure of conventional opinion on any man who lives among those who have known him from a boy, and whose disapproval would disturb long-established associations and trouble tender memories—these influences do not lead a man to aim high, or supply much force to attain such aims as they suggest ; but still when their influence is lacking we see that it is not altogether without value. It makes up what we have hitherto meant by an Englishman, and the species was worth keeping.

We have sometimes wondered that those who feel the British Empire a colossal disaster have not more dwelt upon the fact, unquestionable as it seems to us, that it is a great moral trial for a man to spend his life among those of an alien race. An Englishman in a remote dependency is cut off from many of the lower motives to do right which keep, or did keep, the life of the stay-at-home Englishman at least decorous and decent. Where every relation but that of blood is something exceptional, where acquaintance and neighbours are as changeable as a hand at cards, and mistakes are always best ‘repented on board ship’ (as Lord Elgin told him when he was attacked by a fit of penitence during their mission in Canada), a man needs a very lofty nature, or else a very low one, if his life is to be consistent with any standard of life whatever. We may trace the influence of this vagrant life in a strain

of lawlessness, and then again in a strong reaction against it which taught him to 'feel the weight of chance desires,' and inspired that yearning for a deep consistency which came out in the deepest part of his life.

We have recalled a bygone phase of orthodoxy to suggest an explanation for his vehemence of recoil from the trodden path of religious life, but there are circumstances in our time which more need to be taken into account than the possible oppressiveness of Scotch Sundays. The judgment which pronounced 'Hell dismissed with costs' has forced every earnest and religious mind to ask the question, What is salvation? At all times it must have been felt that to pass from the New Testament to modern religious life was to quit a world of actual experience for one, at best, of sincere anticipation. To St. Paul salvation was evidently something that those who had attained it might be as sure of as the sufferer from cataract that his eyes had been couched. The expectation of Heaven could never be compared to such an experience, but while the fear of Hell was real the hope of salvation was definite. Now the word seems to have lost all intelligible meaning. Not surely that there is not evil enough, here and now, to give a definite meaning to the word if we could anywhere see a deliverance from that evil. We may find the exaggeration of an enthusiast in Laurence Oliphant's assertion in his last work<sup>1</sup> that 'there is not a man from the top of society to the bottom who is not compelled to live a life of crime, judged from the standpoint of the divine morality.' But few would call the sentence more than an exaggeration; and still fewer can see that modern Christianity provides any unquestionable illustration of the possibility of deliverance from these evils. Redemption might be believed in when it was to be tested only by the experiences beyond the grave; now that it has to be applied to the life here, it is seen to demand a miracle, and miracles, it is said, do not happen. Yet the very spirit of the materialistic science which denies them creates in religious minds a craving for some manifestation of spiritual law, analogous to that which has trans-

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Religion*, p. 124.



formed the aspect of the material world through the application of natural law. Such a manifestation it is believed by some persons is actually to be discovered, if we knew where to look for it. 'The immanence of God in man,' said the pure young wife of Laurence Oliphant, in a book as strange as its title, 'becomes now a physical fact, as physical as marital affections, as maternal emotions, as the ardours of heroism, as the tremors of alarm, as the pangs of jealousy, as the heat of rage—but more absolutely and unmistakably physical.'<sup>1</sup> One who could feel this needed no background of a future Hell to give its meaning to salvation. That meaning was supplied far more effectively by a present Heaven.

It appears to us that Mrs. Oliphant possessed and disregarded peculiar facilities for treating the question of the influence of religious conceptions on the physical frame of man. The biographer of Edward Irving must have learnt that persons, unquestionably honest and apparently sane, have been convinced that the operation of the Holy Spirit is not confined to that purification of the heart which they would concede to be its most important influence; nor can those superficial explanations by which rationalists explain away the mysterious circumstances of almost every religious revival have proved entirely satisfactory to her. Yet she dismisses everything bearing in this direction with a smile of kindly compassion, and the thousands of readers who will take their only impression of Laurence and Alice Oliphant from her pages will feel that all that is to be said about their religious ideas is, 'What a pity!' The present critic would not have been at the trouble of writing these lines if those religious conceptions were an episode in two interesting lives which one might regret and pass on. But it is impossible to enter on the subject without bringing in some considerations which touch closely on the realm of silence, and to some will seem to overstep that limit.

There are experiences in the physical life of most men and women which in relation to that life in which

<sup>1</sup>*Sympneumata*, p. 28.

they form no part, might take the aspect of something miraculous. Wedded life, side by side with celibate life, represents the supernatural beside the natural; it includes that intimate interlocking of the physical with the spiritual, that marvellous closeness of the inward and the outward which belongs to the miraculous, and it is indeed a miracle, for it is the prelude to a new existence. Now what we would suggest to the readers of this biography is the question, Is there anything in this most vital, most all-pervading experience of humanity, so common that it has preceded the birth of every man and woman who ever lived, which affords the clue to a mystery even deeper than itself? We will allow ourselves to translate what seems to us true in Oliphant's answer to this question into our own language, and if, with its extravagance, it loses all aspect of originality, it will not, perhaps, the less appeal to those who can discover here some trace of the doctrines they have received by tradition from all those immemorial ages covered by the teaching of the Bible.

The Jewish religion, with the allied faith of Islam, is the only one known to us, of any importance, in which there is no trace of the cleft of sex in the divine world. Everywhere else 'male and female' are words applicable to all personal beings, all are ranged along this dividing line extending throughout heaven and earth. Only in the Jewish Scriptures does it break off when it quits the realm of humanity. But if we read them with that attention which it is so difficult to give to anything extremely familiar, we should take note that this line of cleavage is still present, but that what it divides is no longer one half of humanity from the other, but the whole of humanity from that which is divine. The conception that the relation of marriage is in a peculiar sense the pattern of the relation of humanity to God is woven in with every metaphor in the writings of the Prophets. It is with them evidently not an earthly fact first of all which, on account of its importance and mysteriousness, they use to typify the deepest fact in the relation of the earthly to the heavenly; it is rather that to them the earthly fact



is the shadow of the heavenly. When they speak of Israel as the spouse of the Lord, they are not taking an incident in this transitory human life and glorifying it by a metaphor with what is eternal, they are alluding to a fact already glorified by being the symbol of a relation to the Eternal inherent in the very constitution of humanity. And it is perfectly in accordance with what we should expect that this symbol, if what is divine in it is forgotten—if the earthly union, which is to issue in the divine miracle of creation, be polluted by a surrender to the merely animal part of the nature—it is perfectly natural that this symbol, keeping its preterhuman but losing its eternal element, should bind man not to heaven, but to hell. ‘The root of the moral disease in man,’ says Laurence Oliphant,<sup>1</sup> ‘is the poison which has polluted the generative principle in his organism.’ To unfold the meaning hardly latent in that sentence would take us into the regions rather of truisms than of paradox. The greater part of the world’s wretchedness comes from creatures who would rather do well than ill, who would rather no one suffered any considerable evil, who would even choose that they themselves should suffer a little rather than that those very dear to them should suffer much, but who, when it comes to severe pain, always choose rather to inflict than to bear it; and this in a world where every beat of the pendulum brings to millions the choice of inflicting or bearing pain. There is not one such who would not rather his children were better than himself, although his ideal of what improvement is may be very low, and his willingness to make sacrifice for it very small. Now suppose that men chose their wives, and women their husbands, for reasons no higher and no lower than both choose their friends—that in every wedded pair we saw two persons who were drawn together only by sympathy, each having a companion who represented his ideal; the faulty, imperfect creatures we know would be the parents of children better than themselves, and those who could neither feel nor inspire the love that forms the basis of a life-long union would leave

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Religion*, p. 250.

no posterity. None would become parents who knew that they must transmit to their children disease or grinding poverty, and thus even the physical ills of this world would die away, and the human race would be set in the path of a steady progress which would know no limit and no pause.

What shuts out the race from a path of progress so certain and so universal? The fact that marriage commemorates not only spiritual sympathy but also animal impulse. This it is which hurries men into marriage who know that they must transmit to their children everything that makes life a burden, who, conscious of the hell that awaits those who recognise themselves as founders of an inheritance of endless woe, refuse to look on this side of the responsibilities of marriage, and by their number and respectability have succeeded in stamping with the badge of impurity all who would bring to light the responsibility of Man the Creator. If religion held the power of deliverance from this impulse, felt by many of the best of men and not felt by many of the worst of men, and therefore in itself a non-moral thing but in the strange confusion of this world the parent of almost all its evil—might not such a religion be truly said to open the possibility of salvation?

The books which have suggested the foregoing reflections are the last Oliphant ever wrote, the one for which we agree with his biographer in thinking he chose a very misleading title in calling it *Scientific Religion*, and still more that written in Syria, under circumstances of which he gave an interesting account preserved by his biographer, which will seem to some among its readers very fantastic, and to others full of deep and pregnant suggestion. We do not pretend to have understood every word of these writings, or to attempt to discriminate between what we feel profound truth and baseless speculation, nor can we linger to point out how much even in the last division connects itself with a long past and boasts of an illustrious genealogy. We have merely endeavoured to afford a clue which may guide the reader through these dreams (and also through the whole cluster of speculations with which they



are allied) to reflections of the most practical bearing on the lives of men and of women.

Laurence Oliphant's interest in this problem, according to his biographer, was purely impersonal. 'In his account of himself, as given up to reckless dissipation,' she says, 'there is evidently much of that exaggerated penitence which all sudden converts are so apt to fall into. Society abounds with slander, and he was not likely to escape from its too-usual darts, but that he was ever a vicious man I do not for a moment believe.' The odd combination of those two sentences, as if the slanderous habits of society had somehow led a man to think ill of himself on slight grounds, is perhaps less remarkable than the ascription of 'exaggerated penitence' to a person whose acquaintance the biographer made for the first time in his thirty-ninth year, on the eve of a decision which finally withdrew him from the life in which he had lived up to that hour. Mrs. Oliphant surely confuses the refusal to think ill of another without evidence and the resolution to think well of another against evidence. What she means, probably, is that Laurence Oliphant was no worse than most men. But may not the average life of the clubs, to one who had known all through it yearnings for higher things, suddenly become revealed as 'a sink of corruption'?—(words used by Laurence Oliphant to a friend in describing the effect of his first conversation with Harris). The explanation given by himself of the influence which withdrew him from the political and fashionable life of London and set him to the work of a labourer on a remote American farm—that the life he had lived was one from which he rightly welcomed deliverance, and that the hand of Thomas Lake Harris did indeed draw him from a moral quagmire and lead him to an upward path—seems to us to exhibit that renunciation which closed his career as its most sane and rational action. That it had *nothing* of the love of adventure which formed the interest and supplied the temptation of his character we should not venture to assert, but no adventure in which he ever engaged seems to us inspired by influences so lofty and inspiring. He has given two

pictures of the teacher to whom in his spiritual character he owed so much, and by whom in his worldly character he lost so much, and the two representations curiously bring out the comparatively enlightening influences of gratitude and resentment. We will reproduce that picture, of which the reader now needs to be reminded, as it stands in Oliphant's brilliant and inspiring romance:

‘There are spiritual forces now latent in humanity powerful enough to restore a fallen universe; but they want to be called into action by fire. Sublime moment! when conscious of the Titanic agency within them and burning with desire to give it expression, men first unite to embody, and then with irresistible potency to impart to others that Life which is the Light of men.

‘As I was thus speaking we turned into Piccadilly, and an arm was passed through mine.

“‘Why is it,” asked Broadhem, “that men are not yet at all conscious of possessing this spiritual agency?”

“‘Why is it, ask you?” and the clear solemn voice of my new companion startled Broadhem, who had not seen him join me, so that I felt his arm tremble upon mine. “Ask rather why sects are fierce and intolerant; why worship is formal and irreverent; why zealots run to fierce frenzies and react to atheistic chills; why piety is constrained and lifeless, like antique pictures painted by the old Byzantines upon a golden ground; why Puseyism tries to whip piety to life with scourges, and starve out sin with fasts; why the altar is made a stage where Ritualists delight a gaping crowd, and the pulpit a place where the sleek official drones away the sleepy hour; why religious books are the dullest; why the clergyman is looked upon as a barrel-organ. There is but one answer——” and he stopped abruptly.

“‘What is it?” I said timidly, for I was overwhelmed by the torrent of his eloquence.

“‘We have lost our God. It is a terrible thing for a nation to lose its God. History shows that all nations wherein the religious impulse has gone down beneath formalism, infidelity, a warlike spirit, or a trading spirit have burst like so many gilded bubbles, most enlarged and glorious at the moment of their close.”



“Who is that?” whispered Broadhem. “I never saw him before.”

“I want to be alone with him,” I replied. “Good-night, Broadhem. Think over what I have said. Once realise the *mystery* of godliness, and the martyrdom which it must entail will lose its terrors.”

“Let him sacrifice us if he will,” said he who had before spoken. “The true man is but a cannon-shot, rejoicing most of all when the Divine Artillerist shall send him irresistible and flaming against some foeman of the race. Man—the true man—is the Spirit sword; but the Spirit arm is moved by the heart of the Almighty.”

‘Ah Piccadilly! Hallowed recollections may attach to those stones worn by the feet of the busy idiots in this vast asylum, for one sane man has trodden them, and I listened to the words of wisdom as they dropped from the lips of one so obscure that his name is still unknown in the land, but I doubted not who at that moment was the greatest man in Piccadilly.’<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Oliphant declined, she tells us, to become acquainted with Mr. Harris, when Oliphant offered to bring them together, and in taking up the office of his biographer she keeps the same reserve. She withdraws from the problem with an expression of her confidence in the general good intentions of all concerned, and leaving her readers to find some explanation of his influence over Oliphant other than insanity, contents herself with recording transactions which, apart from some intelligible scheme as to their motive, can hardly be called facts. It seems to us that the person who had declined to meet Thomas Lake Harris was not the person to write the biography of Laurence Oliphant. But if she was to write that biography, we are glad she has to make that avowal. We can fancy that a meeting between two persons so little in sympathy might have weakened the conviction, evident in her account of ‘Twelve Discourses by Thomas L. Harris,’ published in 1860 under the title of *The Millennial Age*, that the writer could not have been a charlatan or a hypocrite. It would be difficult to convey this impression by extract. All the most impressive exhortation that has stirred the hearts of

<sup>1</sup> *Piccadilly*, pp. 259-262 (condensed).

men hovers on edge of what we must call commonplace; the addresses which supply the critic with telling sentences are not such as deeply stir the hearts of men when they seek deliverance from the burdens which oppress them. We must be content with recording our conviction that the appeals here given come straight from the heart of a true man, and embodied some vital power to elevate and purify the hearers, not through the suggestion of fresh thought, or through the expression of some commanding force of character, so much as through the intensity of yearning aspiration which breathes through every page, the upward longing of a heart that groans under the pressure of sin as most men groan under the pressure of pain. Perhaps there will always be associated with this longing a hope, more or less vague, which to the average mind must take the aspect of fanaticism or insanity—the hope for some physical aid or symbol of this regenerative process, some outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace which is to heal the sick soul, and not the soul only. Our Church preserves this hope in its purest form, and associates it with the bequest of our Lord; but many accept it who hardly see the full bearing of the sacramental belief, who even recoil from any other expression of the same idea as low, gross superstition. Mr. Harris, and those who have joined his Brotherhood, believe that the sign of regeneration is an actual new breathing given to man, that the respiration of that man or woman who has attained deliverance from the pressure of evil undergoes a change, and that with this new breath the pressure of all low and fleshly temptation passes away. It is almost another aspect of any belief of this kind that the one step towards the salvation believed attainable should be a sojourn in a community. That which Oliphant joined in 1867 originated not in any scheme of Mr. Harris's, but in an appeal from some of the more earnest members of his audience as a preacher in New York. His exhortations, said his hearers, unless he provided a refuge from the world, were like exhortations to the blind to study or the deaf to listen. If they were to live by a high standard of honesty, if, for instance, grocers were to give up sanding



their sugar and yet live by their groceries, they must become members of a new society. They must either separate themselves from their world, or do as their world did at New York. It was this simple and prosaic ideal which originated the New Brotherhood at Brocton. Mr. Harris no more desired his disciples to break off all connection with the world than the doctor who bids his patients come into his house wishes them to break off all connection with their families. He believed that in sympathetic communion, mutual aid, and healthful industry these sick souls might regain their moral tone, and quit their hospital to regenerate the world where their cure must be tested.

This was what his New Brotherhood was at first. If it did not grow into something different from this, if his own importance did not take a larger place when it was thus expanded and as it were justified by association with so much that we may describe as the machinery of salvation, we can only say that he is unlike everybody with whom it is natural to compare him. 'Read again that utterance of the Lord,' wrote the Chevalier Bunsen to an intimate friend: "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you." Nothing so dangerous as satisfaction in power exercised over spirits.' It is very probable that the connection of Laurence Oliphant and Thomas Lake Harris is an illustration of that warning, but we cannot say that we find any unquestionable trace of error as grievous in his dealings with his disciple as in those of his disciple with him. If the portrait of one who withdrew him from a moral quagmire is not sent down to posterity as that of a greedy impostor, it is because literary power and right feeling have in *Massollam* faded together: and a few references to the book for its biographic value are, we should imagine, the last which are likely ever to be made to it. All the *primâ facie* aspect of their pecuniary dissensions fits in well with the opinion we should form upon them on other grounds, and which, as far as we can judge from Mrs. Oliphant's slight references, is also hers—that it adds one more to the many illustrations of the danger of mixing up monetary and religious transactions,

but does not in itself throw any shadow on either party other than that implied in the fact that each of them yielded to very natural temptations. We should have thought it obvious that money invested in land and given for the advantage of a community could not be resumed at will, and that a careful comparison of the accounts of both parties to the transaction was necessary before any one could judge whether it could be resumed at all. We may say that the impression made by Mr. Harris on other members of English society, equal or superior to Laurence Oliphant in worldly advantages, was rather of uncourteous independence than of interested assiduity. And if the biography contain some accusations not so obviously explicable as that of pecuniary dishonesty, they appear to us even less tested by any sifting of the evidence, or attempt to see it from the point of view of the other side, and they are, we believe, strenuously denied by those who were witnesses to the facts.

The life of Laurence Oliphant is one of those exceptional lives which should be of value in teaching us to understand ordinary lives. It magnifies and illuminates problems which in their average indistinctness we cannot even see, much less solve. Its exceptional element seems to us to lie in its almost magical openness to influences from other minds. Whatever we may think of the extraordinary fact that his marriage with a young and beautiful woman was a purely spiritual union, we must at least feel this to commemorate the accession of some wonderful power—some unspeakable deliverance—which may well be deemed a miracle. Our last words shall be of Alice Oliphant, but we have neither excuse nor space for lingering over the portrait of this pure and heroic soul. We are seeking to interpret what is perplexing, and she was one of those rare beings who leave but a single impression on all who come in contact with them. The book which every one is reading does not indeed, we think, do her entire justice; the author is not enough in sympathy with that minority ‘pushed mightily from within to know for themselves what ails human nature’<sup>1</sup> (words in which Alice Oliphant,

<sup>1</sup> *Sympneumata*, p. 46.



though without thinking of herself, described the central desire and yearning of her nature). But still the fair face that looks at us from the frontispiece of Mrs. Oliphant's second volume corresponds to every sentence her namesake has written about her, the sympathy is only inadequate in degree. She made no sacrifice in quitting London society to form a home for those who in every sense may be called 'the poor'; she found it an adequate hope and aim to surround with her rich genial influence stunted life such as perhaps most of us might have disdained to foster. Surely no influence known to the soil of Palestine ever more recalled that of Him to whom it owes all its associations. Her husband believed that her aid in all his endeavours survived her visible presence, and moulded all that he had to give to the world. Those who regard this view as the extravagance of fanaticism will still allow that it preserves a trace, however distorted, of aspirations commemorated in enduring literature, and will recall the image of Alice Oliphant with that of Beatrice Portinari and Clotilde de Vaux. Others will go further, and see in this belief a clue to all in his intellectual activity that was most real, most beneficent, most enduring. They will feel that nothing which he could ever have left to the world approaches in value that hint, expressed in his least intelligible utterances, of beneficent energies to the development of which what we call death supplies no check, of a union which it consummates and renders eternal.

## COUNT LEO TOLSTOI

THE record of that vicissitude of event and circumstance which makes up a nation's life is left not only on the page of history. It may be traced less plainly, but more indelibly inscribed on the tastes, the feelings, the predilections, of that nation's most ordinary sons and daughters. Even the literature which has no aim but amusement, proclaims, in no uncertain voice, the influence of a national past. Take up a German and an English novel of equal power, you miss at once in the foreign work—though, perhaps, you could not name the lack—the hurry, the compression, the organised literary effect which you find in the English one. A German novel is apt to make one doubt whether Germans turn to fiction with some wish quite different from the desire for amusement which animates the subscriber to the circulating library here. Let the reader who questions this take up Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* and read the scene in which the hero and the two heroines lay the foundations of a summerhouse. He will surely agree with the present writer that nothing equally tedious could have been written by an Englishman or Frenchman of genius. The German language has yet to absorb the hurry of political life—in other words, it has yet to become literary. But Nature, as the sage says in *Rasselas*, sets her gifts on the right hand and on the left, and if the political races be more literary we should expect the non-political to be more scientific. For the student of the physical world never permits himself to use the word 'trivial.' He knows no hierarchy of statements; for him all facts stand on one level. All German writing seems to us permeated with this canon of science—dare we add?—heresy of literature; English writing shows comparatively little of it, French of course is the typical example of its



absence. Let us make the most of our inalienable privileges. The Germans may rob us of our pre-eminence in trade, in empire, in national prestige; they never can rival us in a long national past.

Signs are not wanting, however, that if the fact is unchangeable, its influence on literature is somewhat less than it was. The ideal of the non-historic nations seems spreading; even in fiction plot goes for less than it did, verisimilitude of detail for far more. Men seek to know life as it is; much description and narrative that has no other merit is justified if it be a faithful transcript of experience. We must thus admit a chronological arrangement of fiction, which somewhat confuses that which we have suggested in our division of the historic and non-historic races. If the simplicity and distinctness of the Greek drama be naturally associated with the work of the sculptor; if the glow of Shakespeare, the tender colouring of Dante, give the painter his poetic reflex; the modern school of fiction, tinged as it is by an abhorrence of reserve bred of modern science, and an equality of attention to every separate interest bred of modern democracy, may be fitly compared with the new pictorial art which gives all within the field of vision in its exact proportion and its fulness of detail. There is no reason, it must be remembered, that photography should be inartistic. As a branch of art it seems to us as yet insufficiently developed, but the canvas of the painter reflects its influence already; if photography be still inartistic, art is already decidedly photographic. It is, to an extent it never was before, a copy of Nature. It aims at satisfying a love of detail; it ventures to challenge a comparison with its model, which in all former ages it would have scorned to contemplate as a possible test of its excellence. Travel even so short a distance into the past as from the canvas of Sir John Millais to that of Sir Joshua Reynolds and you perceive the difference distinctly; the elder painter never aimed at satisfying curiosity as to a hundred points on which his successor is as explicit as the camera itself. Reynolds tells us the mood and the character of high-bred men and women; Millais adds to

that perennial aim of portraiture, an amount of information about their clothes and the furniture of their apartments, in which the photograph alone is his rival. We are not prepared for a nice adjustment of our historic framework to our comparison. We have compared Greek art to sculpture, but Homer is as pictorial as Shakespeare, while Dutch art anticipates the photograph. Still, on the whole, the three modes of representation do correspond to three phases of dramatic art, and the camera typifies the mood of an age no less than the chisel and the brush. It supplies with fitting associations a stage of literature in which literature has come under the influence of natural science, and catching something of that impartial view of Nature aiming at a mere record of *what is*, has necessarily lost that selective touch which seeks, in the words of Bacon, 'to give the soul some shadow of satisfaction in the things wherein it is more noble than the world.'

Of this last division of literature we know no better specimen than the great Russian writer to whose works we invite the reader's attention to-day. He gives us the most trivial and the most momentous circumstances of life with scientific impartiality; no other novelist describes such great things and such small things, as it would seem, with equal interest. He shows us the destiny of nations, the crash of armies; he forces us to gaze into that black shadow which Hannibal, in his legendary dream, was warned to leave unseen by avoiding any reverted glance: and then he takes us to the dressing-room where a young lady is hurrying off to a ball, and tells us, although the fact has no influence whatever on the story, that a tuck had to be run in her dress at the last moment! The reader will be grateful to us for sparing him further illustration of the last half of our description. We will enable him to form his own judgment of the first. Something in the following account of the effect of the first sight of Moscow has recalled to us the raptures of Isaiah on the fall of Sennacherib; we give it in the language which (although we have heard the English translation called the best) seems to us most suitable to replace the native tongue of a Russian:—



Surpris de voir réalisé ce rêve si longtemps caressé et qui lui avait paru si difficile à atteindre, c'était dans ce sentiment qu'il admirait la beauté orientale couchée à ses pieds. Emu, terrifié presque par la certitude de la possession, il portait ses yeux autour de lui, et étudiait le plan dont il comparait les détails avec ce qu'il voyait. 'La voilà donc, cette fière capitale,' se disait-il, 'la voilà à ma merci! Où est donc Alexandre, et qu'en pense-t-il? Je n'ai qu'à dire un mot, à faire un signe et la capitale des Tsars sera à jamais détruite. Mais ma clémence est toujours prompte à descendre sur les vaincus! Aussi serai-je miséricordieux envers elle: je ferai inscrire sur ses antiques monuments de barbarie et de despotisme des paroles de justice et d'apaisement. Du haut du Kremlin, je dicterai des sages lois, je leur ferai comprendre ce qu'est la vraie civilisation, et les générations futures de boyards seront forcées de se rappeler avec amour le nom de leur conquérant. "Boyards," leur dirai-je tout à l'heure, "je ne peux pas profiter de mon triomphe pour humilier un souverain que j'estime, je vous proposerai des conditions de paix digne de vous et de mes peuples." Ma présence les exaltera, car comme toujours je leur parlerai avec netteté et grandeur. Qu'on m'amène les boyards!' s'écria-t-il en se tournant vers sa suite, et un général s'en détacha aussitôt pour aller les chercher. Deux heures s'écoulèrent, Napoléon déjeuna et retourna au même endroit pour y attendre la députation. Son discours était prêt, plein de dignité et de majesté, d'après lui du moins! Entraîné par la générosité dont il voulait accabler la capitale, son imagination lui représentait déjà une réunion dans le palais des Tsars, où les grands seigneurs Russes se rencontreraient avec les seigneurs de sa cour. Il nommait un préfet qui lui gagnerait le cœur des populations, il distribuait des largesses aux établissements de bienfaisance, pensant que si en Afrique il avait cru devoir se draper d'un burnous et aller se recueillir dans une mosquée, ici à Moscou il devait se montrer généreux à l'exemple des Tsars. Pendant qu'il rêvait ainsi s'impatiant de ne pas voir venir les boyards, ses généraux inquiets délibéraient entre eux à voix basse, car les envoyés partis à la recherche des députés étaient revenus annoncer, d'un air consterné que la ville était vide.

'La ville était vide!' Those four words sum up not only Tolstoi's picture of the path of a conqueror, but his

view of life. They set forth his judgment on all cruelty, all lust, all worldly endeavour. Whatever these are beside, they are, in the literal and most emphatic sense of the word, *vanity*. They break through the enclosure of law to find a vacuum.

That deep-felt moral is only one of the reasons which suggest a comparison between *Peace and War* and an English novel taking the same subject, and treating it with something of the same feeling—Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. In both we see in the background the dust and smoke of the great army, the thunder of cannon reaches our ears, the figures of the *dramatis personæ* vanish into that cloud, and some reappear no more. The moral atmosphere of the two writers, moreover, is somewhat similar. 'Which of us has his desire, or having it is satisfied?' the last sentence in *Vanity Fair*, expresses something not unlike the feeling in the words we have quoted. But what does the reader remember of the elder novel? A great love, faithful through absence, through coldness, through disappointment, struggling on, through long years, to the satisfaction in which, after all, there lies hid a still greater disappointment. What does he remember of *Peace and War*? A crowd of figures, a tangle of emotions, a hurried complex of incidents. Tolstoi gives a slice of experience. He selects nothing but a certain area of vision, and leaves its contents recorded in the proportion of their actual dimensions. There is no concentration, no rapid sweep of the brush, no broad shadow, everywhere only a transcript of the bewildering variety of actual light and shade.

Is it permissible, in view of the new fatalism of democracy, for the critic to condemn a method he acknowledges to be characteristic of his day? When he translates his own distaste for literary photography into a formula of art, is he as ridiculous as Dr. Johnson criticising Shakespeare, Bentley emending Milton, or Voltaire improving upon Sophocles? We find it very difficult to rise to the elevation of impartial modesty required for that concession, and cannot express with any doubt our anticipation that the reader will agree with us in finding many pages



of *Peace and War* insufferably tedious. They are at least interesting only to that taste for the representation of elaborate detail which finds satisfaction in mere accurate description of things not in themselves interesting, such a satisfaction as that which elderly people remember in their first sight of the daguerreotype. But it must be conceded that this is exactly the state of mind to which the author addresses himself, and that he aims at a transcript of life which would be imperfect if it were never desultory and seemingly purposeless. Experience, for the most part, is undramatic. We often seem to be looking back on a series of beginnings; an acquaintance full of promise ends without ripening into friendship, or friendship fades into cold acquaintance without tragedy or pathos, abandoned pursuits leave our path cumbered with rubbish—everywhere we see the scaffolding side by side with the ruin. Tolstoi's irrelevant detail, his painful reproduction of what is fragmentary and disproportionate, belongs to that search after truth which is the deepest thing in him, and adds its influence to make his page reflect as it does the mood of our own time: its hurry, its candour, its want of reticence, and then again its bewilderment, its questioning of all that its forerunners assumed, and its new assertion of whatever is saved from the wreck with the emphasis of individual conviction and fresh experience.

But the characteristics which fit him to express the life of the present seem to us somewhat to disqualify him to describe the life of the past. His work is everywhere redolent of the problems of the hour in which he writes, and his picture of 'sixty years since' lacks the mellowness of history. Thackeray's picture is not only characterised by a method more suitable, we think, to historic treatment, but it much more nearly belongs to the period which it undertakes to describe. It recalls a set of feelings which are unknown to our generation. When the men of our time assert what he assumed, it is as a matter of individual conviction formed in face of denial; his quiet reference to a background of assumptions hallowed by the adherence of a nation is now impossible. He belongs, in a peculiar, but very real sense,

to the world of Christian tradition. He was a Christian as he was an Englishman. He accepted his country's creed in the same spirit as he accepted its laws. That this ceased to be possible about the same time that photography became common, is, of course, a mere chance. But it is not a chance that at the time of this change literature altered its tone and lost its reserve. As long as a country accepts some corporate expression of faith in the unseen, the ultimate problems of life do not invade the world of literature. We do not mean that there ever was a time when these problems were not discussed. But there was a time when they had to be discussed in face of certain definite answers which formed objects of attack to all opponents, and which might then be said to give a framework to all thought. It was not only that anti-theological writing was different as long as theology was national, the influence of these theological assumptions extended beyond the utmost verge of their logical scope, they gave a training in reticence which influenced not only all expression but all thought. Men see what they look for, and when the ultimate questions of life are problems awaiting solution, the whole of life is pervaded by that spirit of research which finds everywhere the petty and the trivial side by side with the colossal and the momentous, and leaves no large impression undisturbed by parenthesis and exception.

Yet here we must not be supposed to condemn when we merely define. Perhaps when the subject is War, we do better to contemplate the work of the photographer rather than the painter. Open *Vanity Fair* and read the summons to the field of Waterloo; note how the heartless disloyal coxcomb at that trumpet call suddenly becomes a man, and realising for the few hours allotted to him of his worthless life—so the brief mention with which he is dismissed allows us to suppose—the description of Wordsworth's Happy Warrior 'turns his necessity to glorious gain.' Or turn back from a great dramatic artist to *the* great dramatic artist, read in *Henry V.* the night before Agincourt. Shakespeare intensifies the lesson of Thackeray. He shows us War as a source of



the glow that comes over a man when he feels himself to be the member of a nation. 'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers!' That is how war looks to the artist. But it is not thus alone that it should be regarded by the statesman. Let him who has power to involve his country in war learn from the photographer what it is to be

'Forced to go in company with Pain,  
And Fear and Bloodshed, miserable train!'

Let him, with Tolstoi, look upon war as a scene of horror and torture, of sudden terror, of selfish fear; and then again of bewildering confusion, of futile design, of wasted effort and planless sequence of event. Tolstoi, embodying perchance the actual recollections of his father, who served in the campaign he describes, and his own memories of the Crimean war, drags us to the surgeon's tent and turns his camera on the operating table, forces us to hear the shrieks of brave men, to see blood, torn and quivering flesh, to assist at the last convulsions of the dying. We feel the very opposite from all that noble emotion with which Shakespeare thrills us; we are made to sympathise with selfish cowardice, with an engrossing care for one's own skin. It is not that this is the true picture and the other the false one. Although Tolstoi is, and Shakespeare was not, a soldier, it is just as *true* that war makes a man feel himself to be the member of a nation as that it makes him feel pain. The truth of the artist is also the truth of the historian. Our time has awakened to the truth of the photographer; we may possibly regard too exclusively what we are the first to recognise.

And we have reached a stage in the world's development in which this kind of truth has taken a new importance. Each of the great national epochs which we have typified respectively by the art of the sculptor, the painter, and the photographer, corresponds to a certain phase of national evolution. Greek art expresses, though it does not record, the life of the City. For mere individual wealth and taste the sculptor has little to supply. Sculpture demands a public position, a group of

spectators united by common traditions, common faith, and, above all, the State as its patron. It undertakes to tell no story to a curious and ignorant spectator; its effect is conditional on a background of common tradition and a strong framework of corporate life, while it yet supplies in its majestic permanence a compensating influence to all the dangers of that life. The sculptures of the Parthenon remain as an eternal monument to the simplicity, the distinctness, the completeness of the glory of the city. The pictorial art of mediæval Europe speaks less distinctly of the life of the nation, because everything about it is less distinct, but only for that reason. Its richer variety corresponds to a more complex organism; its fuller harmonies express its larger relations; its wealth of portraiture corresponds to the development of private life; while its greatest works commemorate that age inaugurated by Dante's sigh for a united Italy, closed by Shakespeare's triumph in a victorious England. And what group may we associate with the art that aims, above all things, at verisimilitude? It is as much less simple than pictorial art as pictorial art is than sculpture, and our answer is proportionally hesitating and confused. The photograph aptly renders the desultoriness of life in an epoch of disintegration; a political era in which, although the nation is still the starting-point of political action, a hundred signs bear witness that it is no longer that broad, simple unity which is the needed background for popular art. That vague movement which, under the title of Socialism, unites much of what is best and worst in our day, also bears witness that the nation holds its position by no uncontested sway; we hear much of 'nationalities,' we no longer regard a nation as the ultimate unity of our thought. We have modified the word, and the nuance of change, slight as it is, expresses a whole chapter of development.

Of this new phase of life, as of the corresponding new phase of art, Count Tolstoi is naturally fitted to be a typical exponent. One of the 'Tartari Gallizati,' as Alfieri called the Russians, is qualified both by what he



has, and what he lacks, to express the extra-national life but now struggling into existence, and soon perhaps to be called by some name as yet unknown to us. All that a Russian noble can know of national inheritance must be the possession of one who, like Tolstoi, is the descendant of a friend of Peter the Great; but he seems to the English reader almost as much a Frenchman as a Russian. He is at home in Paris, he is at home in the wilds of his native land; but no Russian city seems his home. He seems the member of a nation 'born out of due time,' borrowing its civilisation from the past, hurried into a premature participation in the comity of nations, and craving a fresh start, a new principle of association, and a new respect for individuality. He is thus, in some ways, specially fitted to express the questioning of a time when the cleavage of sympathy has taken new lines, and classes are as much more important than they were as nations are less. The writer who painted pictures of the polished, frivolous, profligate society of high-bred Russia, bearing the stamp of intimate experience in every line, has, it is said, copied the Great Renunciation of Buddha, deserted his class, and, abdicating the privileges of wealth and rank, lives with and for the poor. This noble sacrifice of Tolstoi's—noble it surely is, whatever be thought of its wisdom—is but the climax of tendencies everywhere active among us. The care for the poor has become a religion with all that borderland of conventional respect that belonged formerly to Christianity; those catch its dialect and its gestures who have no real sympathy with its spirit. And the country whose monarch gave freedom to three million serfs, and afterwards fell a victim to the plots of those who would destroy all civil order, is one where this extra-national tendency—this new grouping of human beings, this craving for undiscovered centres—must be at its height. Nihilism speaks not merely of human wickedness; it is the utterance of something that assuredly is a religion to those ready to lay down their lives in its cause—a religion as ready for persecution as the Roman Catholic Church, and also just as ready for martyrdom.

When a new religion arises, national life must grow dim. Or if we invert the metaphor, it is only in the twilight of national life that a new religion can shine upon the world. When Christianity appeared, national life (except in Judea) did not exist, and much that is supposed characteristic of Christianity, both by its enemies and by those who, like Tolstoi, seek to rediscover its original meaning, seems to us the result of its birth into the world at a time of political slumber. What we find most interesting in his mind is his profound sense of individuality, the deep personal feeling that breaks through all the external portraiture of a conqueror; that through the din of war makes us feel the strange solitude of a human spirit, its own impregnable environment of hope and fear, its mighty influence, its vast responsibility, and then again its strange helplessness, and the paradox of character and fate. He is never tired of returning to the irony of history, the confusion which everywhere meets the eye when it seeks to group and explain the persons and movements before it. His countrymen, he sees, are befooled by *the picturesque*, even in the invader that brought upon them the horrors of 1812, while the brave and unselfish Russian who resisted Napoleon is a colourless being in the eyes of Russians. Let him photograph both! We would gladly have found room for a striking scene in the last volume of *Peace and War*, to which we can but refer the reader, describing the reception by Napoleon of the portrait of his infant son, sent him from Marie Louise at Paris on the eve of Borodino; that son who, dying in early youth, left for his epitaph the condensed autobiography 'Ci-gît le fils de Napoléon, né Roi de Rome, mort Colonel Autrichien!' That strange pathetic epigram—though Tolstoi does not quote it—with its far-reaching satiric glance on the futility of human endeavour and the irony latent in all human achievement, seems to gather up the lesson that he would teach in every page. This, he seems to say, is the meaning of human fame; it bequeaths that sense of futility, of vain effort, of dwindling possession, of the arms extended to grasp what in possession is lost in the closed hand, which we feel in contemplating the sons of



great conquerors—the forgotten heirs of Alexander and Napoleon; types of some history hidden in the soul of every man, of some comparison of human aspiration and achievement, well recorded by the bitter jest left for a forgotten tomb.

Most persons have felt probably, in some form or other, the strange relief growing out of an intensified bewilderment. A question which has haunted us oppressively from time to time as it crossed our thoughts with cobweb persistence, becomes a solid barrier, to be overleapt or broken down, and we discover that it is all we need. If we have understood the strange and deeply interesting book<sup>1</sup> in which Count Tolstoi sets forth his religious experience, the problems of life were intolerable to him till they became overwhelming, as he saw them to be insoluble, and supplied their own answer. He pondered over this strange scene of confusion, of pettiness, of indistinct disaster, seeking for a plan; he sought in vain, and the vain search answered itself. Just as the critic blames his desultoriness and heterogeneity till he sees that it is the very object of his art, so he rebelled with bitter protest against the meaninglessness of life, until he traced here also the intention of the Supreme Artist. With that discernment all becomes clear. This edifice of civil society, erected by the toil and energy of countless generations, is in very truth a crumbling ruin; let the Christian cease to

<sup>1</sup> The truth of this description will be felt by those, and by those only, to whom the editor offers it—those who are ‘more in search of truth than of style.’ The rich and pregnant character of our material forbids such a transcript of the biographic sketch in this volume as we would gladly have attempted. We must content ourselves with extracting these few dates and facts, helpful to the student of Tolstoi’s work, and with asking the modest editor, whose part we would gladly have seen made more ambitious, what is the meaning of a statement on p. vi, by which Tolstoi is made a contributor to this Review fourteen years before it existed.

Nicholas Tolstoi, an officer in the Russian army, . . .	1812.
Leo Tolstoi born, . . . . .	1829.
„ „ discards all religion, . . . . .	1845.
„ „ a volunteer in the Caucasus, . . . . .	1851.
„ „ begins to write, . . . . .	1852.
„ „ commands a battery at Sebastopol, . . . . .	1855.
„ „ a country magistrate, . . . . .	1861.
„ „ marries, . . . . .	1862.
„ „ is converted, . . . . .	1879.
„ „ writes <i>What I Believe</i> , . . . . .	1884.

wonder at its flaws, ponder no more over a crack here, a yawning fissure there, but once for all turn his eyes to his true home, and leave the hut of the campaigner to tumble into ignoble ruin. We are not translating Count Tolstoi's belief into any rhetorical distortion. If 'Resist not evil' mean, as he interprets the words, 'Let every wrongdoer go his way,' there is no such thing as a Christian State. The world would be thus divided between a band of martyrs, suffering at the hands, not only of the civil authorities, but of any ruffians who chose to pillage and illtreat unresisting victims, and, on the other hand, a set of average men and women, including many of the best and worst specimens of both, who openly repudiated all adherence to Christianity. But those who found themselves members of the Church of Christ, Tolstoi thinks, would trouble themselves very little about aught beside; and he speaks with authority, for he believes himself to have found truth, and to discern its antagonism to all that this world has to give, which certainly it has given him.

And yet no one has ever painted more vividly than he the struggle of those instincts in man which recognise the State—those relations which shape the life of the secular world—with another set of instincts and relations which make up what we may call the church, and centre in man's relation to God. Tolstoi does not shrink from testing the problem in its most difficult aspect; he forces his reader, in *Anna Karénina* (a novel which, for the reason we have given, we incline to think a better work of art than *Peace and War*), to ask the questions: 'Is there any unity but that of the soul and God? Is the family to be considered as a whole any more than the nation? Is there to be any sanction on its oneness? any punishment for the faithless wife and the adulterer?' If we have rightly connected the tendencies apparent in the novel with the religious belief set forth in the later work, Tolstoi intends us to reply in the negative.<sup>1</sup> The injured man would not even refuse

<sup>1</sup> The translator of *Christ's Christianity* tells us that Tolstoi's views underwent a radical change after writing this novel. It appears to the present writer that though the situation described above is given as a mere problem, the answer was already latent in Tolstoi's mind.



permission to the guilty mother to feast her eyes on the child she has deserted (so we understand the implied lesson), if he were ready to exercise the forgiveness due from a Christian. Tolstoi depicts with wonderful power the effort of an injured husband to follow what he conceives the law of Christ; he fearlessly confronts that law with all the most potent influences which rise up against its fulfilment; he does not shrink from hinting that the strongest of those influences is the consciousness that the command is, in a certain sense, easy to the coward. The husband who dares not kill the adulterer, is forced, as he strives to forgive him, to recognise the strange complex difficulty of a base ally on the Christian side. The picture of the relation between the two men is very revolting to an English reader. Count Tolstoi, perhaps, would say that, for this very reason, the case is fitted to test the Christian's obedience to the command of a Lord who can less consent to share a divided allegiance than the husband a divided fidelity. True; but let us face also the fact—for here lies the very kernel of the problem—that, if we understand the duty of non-resistance to evil in this sense, we give up the unity of the family. Man and woman *cannot* be one flesh, if either may experiment at will in foreign relation, and then return to the oneness they have temporarily abandoned. If it can never be forfeited, neither can it ever be gained. And let no one suppose that he can avoid the problem by ignoring Christianity. Ours is, in the deepest and widest sense of the word, the age of unreserve; all that our forefathers held sacred is brought forward to be flung into the crucible of research, and the relation of the sexes is no exception. The art which depicts the whole of life corresponds to a theory which sanctions the whole of impulse. The disintegrating tendencies of our age come from opposite quarters; and the question suggested to the reader of Tolstoi by the spectacle of an injured husband who strives to obey Christ, will be echoed by the study of many a writer to whom all but the name of Christ is almost unknown.

Perhaps one of the strongest points of interest in Tolstoi's account of his religious experience, for an English

reader, is its illustration of the influence exercised by the fact that the writer belongs to a non-historic race. He has not inherited, from scores of his ancestors, the conviction, gradually strengthening through all, and reaching the last with the accumulated force of the whole descent, that nothing can be good which impairs the unity of the nation. He is quite ready to listen to evidence in this direction, but he requires evidence. An Englishman can hardly begin to inquire whether national life be a desirable result of social evolution. History is too strong for him. We by no means make the comparison in the interest of our own nation. A Russian is, we concede, or rather we earnestly urge, better prepared than an Englishman to consider the scope of those commands of Christ which seem to ignore, almost to deny, the supremacy of the State. He does not start from the assumption that they must be explained away. He sees on every side men who are ready to lay down their lives if they may destroy every symbol of national unity; it can be no difficulty to him to conceive that for far other motives than theirs an unseen Lord should demand a like surrender. Many a Nihilist surely must feel it harder to take life than to lay it down. Can it be hard to do that for Christ, which so many are ready to do for a hope they are utterly unable to justify on any rational ground? The problem is more urgent for a Russian, but the time presses it upon us all. We, standing in the full noon of our modern European civilisation, must sometimes be tempted to ask, surely—What is it all worth? For an Englishman with a University education, it may be an actual element in satisfied consciousness

‘That Chatham’s language is his mother tongue,  
And Wolfe’s great name compatriot with his own.’

But what of those who form, after all, the bulk of the people? What of some inhabitant of the East end who has never known a moment’s solitude except in the streets, or an hour’s physical comfort except in a public-house? Is it a tangible advantage to such as these to feel themselves the members of a nation? And if not to them, must we



not confess that our civil order has failed, and may as well make way for something different?

These pages are written by one who believes quite as firmly as Count Tolstoi does that if any man, with his eyes opened to the meaning of eternal realities, had to choose between the inestimable advantage of being the member of a nation on the one hand, and on the other of obeying the commands of Christ, he would not hesitate for a moment to fling aside all that vast inheritance of political life to sacrifice which for any other reason were a grievous crime. The further concession to the view of Count Tolstoi—that the words of Christ do, at first sight, appear hostile to the life of the State—may be made without any personal limitation. The very words so often cited as a concession to civil claim form the strongest evidence on the side of one who would exhibit this hostility. ‘Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s’ was a clear renunciation, on the part of a Jew, of that protest against the claim of the Cæsar which the national instinct demanded; and the Pharisee who had asked that question must have felt in hearing the answer that the dangerous prophet was discredited in the eyes of those Jews who would throw off the yoke of Rome. The Sermon on the Mount is read by Count Tolstoi as a protest against civil life, and he is nearer the truth in so reading it, we firmly believe, than are those who take it for the utterance of a string of truisms. The commands of Christ mean not less but more than the commands of other men. Perhaps it will be discovered, by one who sets himself to obey them, that these commands, far from being mere suggestions for a saintly perfection which the average man may admire at a distance, or mere rhetorical exaggerations of elastic rules of kindness and moderation, are just as absolute, and, in the mere natural order of things, just as impossible as they seem.

The prudent critic, perhaps, would take leave of Count Tolstoi with two remarks, not likely to be controverted by any reader. One is that any one does Christians an inestimable service who forces them to ask what the commands of Christ really mean; the other is that the same cause which hurts Tolstoi’s power as an artist,

interferes with his power of interpreting the message of his Lord. An imprudent critic ventures on an expansion of this last criticism so as to include suggestions for a fuller answer. In poring over the command, 'Resist not him that is evil,' Tolstoi seems to us to lose sight of the promise, 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' He takes the Sermon on the Mount as the legacy of one whose voice can reach us no more; we would read it as the first word of a leader ready to command his army as long as it exists. The first word of a leader gives the key-note of his generalship. If any one be not ready for that sacrifice which the Sermon on the Mount demands, let him not call himself a Christian. There is a part of the nature to which it is always addressed. So far as man is alone with God, so far he must, if he would follow Christ, turn the cheek to the smiter, give the coat to him who has taken the cloak, and go the last weary mile, when he has gone far before. If any one thinks the command, thus understood, to be easy, he has never tried to obey it. Each one of us constantly refuses to acknowledge the moral domain where he is alone with God; he will not consent to that arduous isolation. Else all unkindness, all grudge, all that spoils the sweetness of life, would vanish utterly. Who would clutch at this piece of worldly gain? who would refuse that measure of toil? who would resent this injury, if he felt that it were for him *alone* to gain or to endure? Pain is always pain, and we perhaps speak of it too lightly; but it is not the refusal to endure what poor human nature can hardly contemplate that comes between man and man in the ordinary commerce of life, it is the intrusion of the *self* into that region of claim which belongs only to the group; it is the 'I' in each one of us which takes the place of the 'we.' But we are not therefore at liberty to invert this process and abdicate our post in the region of claim. Each one is a member of a larger unity, and has to resist whatever impairs the organic unity of the group, be it the family or the nation, which he has the power to guard. The husband is not a mere atom, to be injured only in his own person. He is the guardian of the family. He may not endure any injury to that which he is bound to



guard ; to him the command of Christ is that, never noticed by Tolstoi, '*If he repent forgive him.*' How can he, it may be asked, guard the unity of that which the faithless wife has already broken? He can keep unhurt the protest of a withheld forgiveness which must only be granted to repentance. In England, it may be thought, there is little danger that he should ever do otherwise. Those who think thus are destined, we believe, to be rudely undeceived before many years are past, but the danger, as it is illustrated by the creed of Tolstoi, is not so much that men should cease to follow those instincts by which family and civil life are guarded, as that they should identify Christianity with the spirit which opposes those instincts, and insists on a mere individualism annihilating claim. If all Christians manifested steadfast purity and love in their own lives, even if they refused to enforce it on their own children, they would, perhaps, be better men and women than they are now; but the bulk of mankind, forced to choose between Christianity and a principle of civil and family life, will not choose Christianity. Count Tolstoi's creed will leave on the mind of the ordinary man an impression that Christianity is a religion partly for saints and partly for fools. That Christian teacher has surely erred who hides from the ordinary man that Christianity is the religion for him, although the error, when it is accompanied by such a model of aspiration as we have in *Christ's Christianity*, may be called a sublime one. It is the prompting of God's spirit, as it speaks through all the noblest instincts of our time, which has taught Count Tolstoi that 'the true life is the common life of all';<sup>1</sup> but 'the common life' will, on the lips of less earnest men, become an unreal phrase, unless it is accepted in that gradation of outward grouping which is God's work and not man's; unless the sacredness of the Family and the Nation be upheld by a sternness of purity that can inflict as well as endure suffering, and enforce as well as renounce claim.

<sup>1</sup> *Christ's Christianity*, p. 344. Kegan Paul, Trench and Co.

## MORALS AND POLITICS

THE spectator admitted to the laboratory of a Lavoisier or a Faraday, who should choose the moment when some great discovery seemed imminent to compose himself to slumber, would sacrifice a smaller opportunity of advantage than he who permits the agitations of the last few months to recede into the past without gaining from them some clearer decision on the connection of the two subjects named in our title. It has been one of those occasions—so much, we believe, both parties to the great controversy of our day would allow—when the complications of the political world have, as it were, thinned away and allowed some principles of a higher order to shine through them. We do not suppose that the original difference of view between Home Rulers and Unionists will fail to reappear in all decisions arrived at by either party, for it is fundamental. But the two may so far combine as to determine the common principles from which they draw different conclusions, and disentangle the permanent elements of their controversy from that which belongs to the characters of individuals, and the exigencies of particular circumstances. And this is the aim of the present essay.

Both sides will agree in regarding these events and discussions as evidence of a change in public feeling of great importance and far-reaching influence, both in public and private life. It has manifested the existence of a moral standard which may be described as the complete inversion of that which was dominant in antiquity, and kept its place during the greater part of the 1900 years which divide us from antiquity. We seem so far to have changed the gradation of blame as to have altered the



whole scope of morality. If we put it briefly, we may say that the code of the woman seems to have superseded the code of the man. 'Immorality' has come to be applied in an exclusive sense, to that part of immoral action by which woman is always the sufferer, and sometimes the innocent sufferer; it is, on the other hand, almost cut off from application to that realm of life in which women have hitherto taken no part—the realm of politics. The first half of our assertion is obvious. 'A moral man,' we all know, is a description that commits itself to a moral guarantee only in one particular direction. But many will demur to the assertion that in our day morality is divorced from politics. Much of what is most obvious does not look like this—looks like the very opposite. Probably there never was a period, during the lifetime of any person now living, when so much indignation was excited by any political question whatever, and that equally on both sides, as during the last few years, and especially the last few weeks. To say that most of this indignant feeling should be called anti-political rather than political may appear a mere quibble. Nevertheless, that is exactly what we aim at showing here.

There is a perplexing tendency in human nature by which a strong enthusiasm passes, like a treacherous ally, from a particular cause to its opposite, and, kindled in its passage to that glow of vehemence which is characteristic of destructive as opposed to constructive action, seems to reassert in a purer form some principle which in truth it lives to oppose. Nothing is more religious in its tone than much polemic against religion; nothing more antagonistic to anything that our fathers would have recognised as a polity than the spirit which most gives animation to the political world of our day. All zeal takes the mould of what it opposes. The whole energy of the Home Rule movement, on English soil, is derived from an expenditure, in an inverse direction, of the stored-up energy of many generations of political thinkers and workers. We repeat, on English soil. Among Irishmen, no doubt, it is something very different, partly better, partly worse; if any of this anti-political spirit mixes

with it, the intrusion may be called an accident. But if the English leaders of the Home Rule party set themselves to confront the idea of a polity, they would, we are convinced, lose all popular English support, at all events that (and it is of that alone we are now speaking) which gives the movement its fervour.

Politics, we ought never to forget, *takes its start* from the idea of a polity. It does not gather up into itself every possible moral consideration concerning the welfare of a number of people, it is inseparately bound up with the idea of a State. This is the idea against which the spirit dominant in our time makes war. The lines of cleavage along which popular feeling directs its structural energy are all lateral; in concerning itself with the interests of classes, it loses sight of the claims of a nation. Not that the two interests are incompatible, not that a good Government will not attend to both, not that there may not be many occasions on which the former need is the more pressing of the two. But still it is necessary to politics that the idea of the State shall be ultimate. And when it is conceded, as in our day it is more and more conceded, that all association should be voluntary, that the limits of a State are an open question, a strong desire on the part of any set of people to remove themselves from its jurisdiction being a legitimate object at least for consideration, then, by whatever name you designate the zeal which furthers this claim, you should not, if you are attempting any exact expression, call it political. If it become dominant it makes the very idea of a polity unintelligible.

This view of political feeling may be tested by the watchwords of a popular enthusiasm always roused, it will be found, by the name of that virtue which, on political ground, is impossible. When Mr. Asquith, in a late address, pleaded for a *generous* measure of Home Rule, he at once struck the true key-note of unthinking sympathy (and such must always be the sympathy of the majority) and pronounced condemnation, from a political point of view, on any possible national act to which the epithet could be applied. See how such an action looks in the past! The historian of France, in recording an in-



stance of abnegation in the saintly Louis IX., by which a part of his dominions was surrendered, under no stress of war but only from a sense of duty, to a rival, pauses to remark upon the calamity to that nation whose king earns the title of saint by acts which mar his title to that of ruler. The people transferred from a good to a bad rule protested in vain against the transference, in which their interests should have been the primary consideration, and in which they went for nothing. Historic parallels need some change of symbolism in order to fit each other, and we must, if we have any historical feeling, compare the *people* of that day with the *minority* of this. But it remains true in every age that the virtue of political life is justice. Generosity belongs to individual relation. Where it is urged on a *people* it will generally happen, as certainly was the case with Mr. Asquith's hearers, that those whose enthusiasm was raised by the idea of generosity were those whose interests were not attacked by the transaction which was supposed to display it. Generosity implies sacrifice; whose is the sacrifice made in favour of a generous measure of Home Rule? But, indeed, this question, though all-important with regard to the political issue, may be treated from our point of view as secondary. The loyal Irish minority have as little the right to act with generosity in this matter as the English populace have the power. One generation has no more right to sacrifice the interests of its successors than one race has to sacrifice the interests of another race. When a Government has secured the interests of justice, as far as it can ascertain them, it has done its best to give every class, every race and every generation all that generosity could give them. When it aims at generosity to any, it is certain to inflict injustice on some, and perhaps on all.

There is a strange oblivion of this truth in strictly political life, but everybody sees it in all private relation which approaches political life in its character. Imagine, for instance, a father urged to make a will in favour of one of his children, and suppose the suggestion to take the form of an appeal to his generosity; there is not

surely, any one capable of making a will at all with so little understanding as to be deceived by such an appeal. 'Generous!' a man of sense would retort; 'how can I be generous in apportioning advantages in which I shall have no share?' To allow the idea of generosity to influence the mind of a testator is to guarantee the perpetration of injustice. Everybody feels this about the only action of private life which may be compared to legislation, yet, strange to say, the moment we get on legislative ground this principle, though never questioned by thinkers, is constantly ignored by orators and sometimes implicitly denied by party leaders. And nothing is so popular in public expressions as an appeal to the virtue which they can by no possibility elicit. Those who have never to pay the price of generosity, retain their eagerness to incur the debt.

But perhaps it is not from the watchwords of enthusiasm that we best trace the course of moral feeling. The canons of logic coincide in many respects with those of art; in both alike the shadows indicate more exactly than the lights the outline of the object which it is desired to depict. If we seek thus to give an outline to the political creed of our day, we shall discover a tendency not so much to change the importance of what our fathers called treason, as to invert its moral significance. In former days it was no more thought necessary to prove the excellence of a Government before punishing treason than to prove the excellence of an individual before punishing murder. Now, the *prima facie* aspect of what was the heaviest accusation known to our fathers is something self-sacrificing and heroic; it always produces a vague general belief that some one is making an unselfish endeavour to free his country from oppression. If popular feeling does not quite get so far as to claim admiration for every such attempt, any shadow of blame which it involves is of the very lightest character. Any attempt to put it down with a strong hand is a sin against liberty. Coercion is a name that does duty for an argument. Yet coercion is no more than the self-assertion of the State. It is a term which in its ample scope



gathers up some of the worst exercises of human activity, and some of the best ; all that we can say about it in a positive sense is that, where a polity is, there coercion follows as its shadow. Of course the leaders of the movement know this, and are perfectly aware that, if it were successful, coercion would go on just as much as it does now, only that the persons coerced and those who exercised coercion would change places. And where this fact and all that it involves is kept in view, we do not deny that the movement may be called political, but what we are certain of is that all the popular English sympathy which attends it depends on the power to forget this side of the question, and regard the whole movement as one for making people free to do what they like. And so far as these words describe the movement, its animus is not political, but anti-political.

This anti-political spirit characteristic of our day is, we have said, the very inversion of the ideal of antiquity, and, except that the complication with religion brings in a different element, it is not much nearer the feeling of mediæval Europe. As a political creed it doubtless takes its start from the French Revolution, but its appearance on English soil, so far as our knowledge goes, is far more recent. We recall it first in a plea for leniency to the Fenian convicts, about three-and-twenty years ago, on the ground that they ought to be considered in some sense prisoners of war. Nobody wants to punish prisoners of war. Their detention, with all its inevitable disadvantages, is a measure of precaution, not in any sense an expression of displeasure, and any suffering inflicted on them, as an end and not a means, would be condemned universally. When any one goes on to urge that an immunity from any penal infliction, similar in kind if less in degree, may be claimed for those who are *not* prisoners of war, he leaps from a truism to what would, in former ages, have been regarded as an extravagant paradox. The belief that insurrection was not only a danger which the State was at liberty to suppress, but a crime which it was bound to punish, had been an axiom as undisputed as the right of self-defence in an individual ; it was still the firm belief of

most people, and the plea we recall was at the time felt insignificant. Yet it had the significance of the first piece of wet sand that marks the turning tide. Ought the difference between respect for the hero and indignation with the criminal to depend on the accident of success or failure? Should not admiration of success imply sympathy in failure? So, perhaps, many a reader of the newspapers asked himself even at that time, and a larger number now would answer the questions in the affirmative. If they are right, there is an end of politics properly so-called. A State which is ready to split itself up into any number of new States can only be called a polity in the sense that a creature so low down in the organic scale as to propagate itself by fissiparous division can be called an animal. We do not say that this of itself settles the question of the rightness of this change. To many minds, we fully concede, this decay of what is in its strict sense political feeling, presents itself as a stage in our moral evolution whereby some higher form of society than the polity is dawning on the world. The substitution of social for strictly political interests appears to such minds as an ascent into a region where the horizon widens, and limitations are seen in relation to a larger field of interest. We even conceive that they might support such views by much reference to history; as the life of the nation, they might say, has succeeded to the narrow city-life of antiquity, so in our time a preparation is seen for an analogous transformation, by which something as much wider than the nation is to form our standard of unity as Great Britain is wider than Athens. And whichever way the controversy of our day be settled, it will have shown that to many of what are called the most advanced minds of the age, the political phase of civilisation seems about to make way for one which is to be animated by broader principles of association, and more generous springs of action.

If the foregoing considerations have any force, they will have made clear why the question as to sexual relation is joined with the question as to social principle, not only by the dramatic events of a particular winter, but by the perennial laws of human nature. A certain claim, hitherto



ultimate and paramount, has almost disappeared from the moral horizon of a large portion of mankind; a vast force of indignation, hitherto absorbed in its service, is set at liberty for other aims. The relation of man and woman takes up the interest lost from the relation of State and subject. We have reached the antipodes to the classic theory of morals. Our moral scale is that theory inverted. The actions we extrude from the scope of morality then occupied the centre of morals. When the things that were damnable become innocent, the things that were innocent become damnable. Private life, with Greece and Rome, was the sphere of the indifferent; Pericles might enthrone a mistress in the place of his repudiated wife, Cato might lend his wife to a friend, Cicero might repudiate his, after thirty years' wedlock, to marry an heiress, and we hear hardly a word of blame from any quarter. For an offence against the State, on the other hand, there was no pardon. Invert this code of the ancient world, and we have that of our own day. We have reached it somewhat suddenly, it is true. The century of Sir Robert Walpole seems, in this respect, nearer a past from which it was separated by two millenniums, than a future from which it was separated by a hundred years. But the extreme contrast of our own day and the ages of classic antiquity does, nevertheless, sum up the tendencies of both, on the whole. Towards this goal we have been travelling throughout our progress, though it is a sharp turn which has brought it in view at last.

The events of the present winter seem as if they were the plot of some well-constructed novel, carefully arranged to disentangle the comparison of these two standards from all irrelevant matter.<sup>1</sup> Its hero has not, in private life, committed any irregularity which would have marred the career of any political leader in Athens or Rome; while in

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it may be objected that, to make this strictly the case, Mr. Parnell should have told no lies; his deposition may conceivably be regarded as the separation rather from an untrustworthy colleague than from an adulterer. But it must be remembered that he had already avowed to the Special Commission his intention to mislead Parliament, when his offences against political morality were compared to those of an applewoman who stops up the pathway.

public life, if we could imagine any Athenian or Roman to have had to confess to similar acts of encouragement to a province in revolt, his apologists would have been limited to those who were prepared to take up arms against the State whose authority was threatened.<sup>1</sup> The greatest men of antiquity could as little have understood the sympathy as the reprobation meted out to him. They would have thought Edinburgh, in conferring the freedom of her city upon him, was formulating an implicit desire for war with England; as to the feeling which demanded his deposition from the leadership on account of his adultery with his friend's wife, it would have been quite inexplicable to them. Of course, they could perfectly well have understood indignation on the part of the friend himself, but to discover private wrong converted into public crime would have seemed to them something altogether irrational and bewildering.

The standards of the ancient and the modern world are also, we have said, the standards respectively of man and woman. We should in our own time find plenty of confusing cross-lights to blur this distinction; but the apportionment which assigns to one sex a special interest in condemning the offences of public life, to the other a like interest against those which concern the home, is at once obvious and fundamental. Good women do not condemn many kinds of dishonesty which very imperfect men will not commit, while a sacrifice of private to public interests, if it entail hardship on those dear to her, is what only an exceptional woman can see as plain duty. And, on the other hand, men admit to their company those who are rigorously excluded from female society, and many a man would feel a shock at finding his own estimate of certain offences confirmed by his wife. But if we look not only to what is unquestionable and obvious, but to inchoate tendencies, manifested by numerous though not yet unmistakable signs, we shall discern the approach of a new spirit which, while it at first sight seems to embarrass

<sup>1</sup> Of course we must imagine Mr. Parnell an Englishman to keep the analogy true; in any sense in which the Irish members are not Englishmen, Cicero was not a Roman.



and blur this apportionment of two ideals, does really hold a clue to the true meaning of the latest ideal. We refer to the fact, which we may describe, we believe, in the words of Mr. Gladstone, in one of his literary notices, that people are beginning to lose faith in marriage. It is, we are told, a fact that might be illustrated by statistics; we are very sure that it is one which signs of more pregnant force are not lacking to establish. In truth, the interest in man's relation to woman, which, as we have said, has superseded the interest in his relation to the State, does not incorporate that conception of fidelity which belonged to it, nor hold at bay the spirit of reaction which has disorganised the world of politics. As the new 'enthusiasm of humanity' has shown itself in contempt for the idea of a polity as a framework too narrow for universal brotherhood, so the new enthusiasm for the woman's ideal has shown itself in an analogous contempt for the institution of the legitimate family. The sanctity of marriage, imperilled in former days only by the forces of cruelty and lust, is attacked in ours by the hosts of a specious philanthropy, and of a fantastic aspiration after something higher than purity.

It is ill to despise these foes, on the ground that they can deceive no one who does not seek excuse for license. They have on their side facts so hideous that the recoil from them seems like concession of all claims made by those who bring them forward. Marriage, alas! is not the only medium through which man unites himself with woman. How many a wife, if she knew upon whom her husband's caresses had first been lavished, would feel that she could endure them no more! Sometimes, perhaps, she has a partner, where she is unconscious even of a predecessor; in either case she may be regarded as the member of an aristocracy against which the reforming ardour of our day directs its zeal, as against every other aristocracy. For the idol of a democracy—Equality—there seems always this to be said, that if you could really ensure it, you would enlist an enormous force on the side of the reforming energies of the world. If the wife were forced to share the degradation of the mistress she has displaced, the

seducer might perhaps find his next triumph more difficult. And when all ties between man and woman stand on one level, whatever be the wretchedness of those who know only the most fugitive and external, they will at least lose that opprobrium which comes from the neighbourhood of a class which casts them into icy shadow. They will venture into the light of day, they will be at liberty to make themselves felt as a power, they may obtain whatever alleviation is possible to distinct recognition, and the alliance with those whose happiness it has been hitherto to ignore their existence. Let it not be thought that this is our argument. God forbid that in the endeavour to represent fairly those who are doing the Devil's work, we should confuse our own protest against it! But the spirit which, while attacking all woman's dearest interests, seems to itself to be attacking only the immunities of a privileged class, in order to force the indignation of the virtuous to run in the same channel with the possible regrets of the vicious, is not the only instance of a zeal eager to destroy a partial good which the zealots deem themselves working to establish in its completeness. 'Away with this wretched pretence of righteousness!' is the cry of many who sincerely seek to make the world more righteous. They may keep the sincerity of their endeavour, but their followers will not. They will discover too late that it is at the bidding of Satan they have cast themselves from the pinnacle of the Temple, that He who gives his angels charge to watch over the security of His servants works no miracle to save from ruin those who break with His teaching in the past.

The study of classic antiquity shows with hideous plainness what is the character of that civilisation which dwelt exclusively on the male side of life, which had no reverence for weakness, no compassion for suffering, no honour for purity. Must it be the fate of our day to exhibit a correspondent moral mutilation? When 'morality' means purity, so that the woman's view of man exhausts all that is to be said about him, and the selfish, the cruel, the deceitful, may all be 'moral,' supposing they lack one particular temptation or resist it—when the State recedes, like an abandoned mistress, and the



interests of the domestic hearth eclipse the destiny of nations—when loyalty to an unchosen claim vanishes like a dream, and the variations of preference, alike in public and private life, settle the coherence of every union—then let it not be thought that we keep tenderness, compassion, and purity. They grow out of the mutual relation of woman's life to man's life. They do not survive an isolation of the womanly ideal. No cruelty is like that of cowardice, no purity is possible where there is no fortitude, no abiding tenderness where there is no truth. The whole vitality of womanly virtue depends on its response to manly virtue; cut off from that, it withers and dies. We will not dread for our country so great a calamity as this divorce, though the hour be full of menace. We believe that the eclipse of manly virtue is allowed to show us how fugitive, without it, is womanly virtue; how nearly allied are the security of the family and the State; how surely, apart from reverence for bonds deserted by pleasure, kindly feeling allies itself with license, and makes way for every foe to purity. We look for the re-emergence of the man's ideal, and a true human righteousness.

## ETHICS AND SCIENCE

THOSE who can look back, through the mists and storms of nearly half a century, to the comparative lull between the political agitation of the Crimean war and the intellectual agitation stirred by *The Origin of Species*, will recall the publication of a book the immediate effect of which was much stronger than its permanent position in literature would appear to justify. Buckle's *Introduction to the History of Civilisation* remains, indeed, a volume of much interest, and has its warm partisans, whose claim for it would chime in with all that was felt by its earliest readers; but a remark made on it by one who was among its most enthusiastic admirers on its first appearance—Charles Darwin—recurs now almost as a verdict. 'How curiously the fortune of books changes!' he said, on re-perusing that one shortly before his death; 'what a stir that book made among us when it first came out, and now it is dead!' Its significance for the student of to-day is that of some ancient mark of high tide where the land has gained upon the sea—it records a limit that has long vanished. Its argument may be summed up in a few sentences. There is in the world such a thing as progress; civilisation is a growing thing. Morality, on the other hand (he assumed), is evidently a stationary thing. A good man at one age is much the same as a good man at another. Therefore civilisation (he inferred) must depend on something which is capable of increase, and this is evidently knowledge. The momentum and the direction of progress are given exclusively by science. As one gives this bald summary of a book which took the world by storm, one wonders that its wealth of illustration and vigour of expression could blind its readers to assumptions



so baseless. But Buckle, daring heretic as he thought himself and was thought by others, when he assumed that moral development was only individual, merely echoed a view then common to the thoughtless and the thoughtful. John Mill, in his essay on *Utilitarianism*, urges that on the issue whether morality is intuitive or what he called utilitarian—decided, that is, by considerations referring to general enjoyment—depends the further issue, whether it is an advancing or a stationary thing. ‘How so?’ asked a reviewer (in words here necessarily remembered and not copied). ‘Why must we take this for granted? Why should not the general conscience be a growing thing, as well as the general knowledge? The review, which is traceable to the pen of Dr. Martineau, was the earliest protest I can recall from contemporary literature against a view which ignores or defies the lessons of all history.

Nothing is more unquestionable, surely, than that the character and actions which men admired and approved, for instance, in the thirteenth century are different from those which we admire and approve now. Many people think that the good man of the nineteenth century is better than the good man of the thirteenth; a few think that he is not so good; the wise and thoughtful, who are also few, consider that he is both better and worse; but all would agree that he is different. The best of men were ready then for actions from which the worst would shrink in our day. Who, in our time, would burn a fellow-creature alive? Six hundred years ago it would have been the most ardent philanthropists who were ready for that action. We cannot say that philanthropy was unreal then and is real now. We may be very thankful that it is purged of noxious and hateful superstition; but if we suppose that it was in no spirit of love for mankind that a St. Dominic desired to burn a heretic, then we are equally blinded by superstition of our own. We cannot measure our approximation to the moral feeling of the past by our actual nearness to it. If we look back a little way we shall find ourselves among men who felt very differently from the way their repre-

sentatives feel to-day; if we go back much farther we may find ourselves among people much more sympathetic with our own standard. Cicero and Horace would be more likely to agree with nineteenth-century men of the world than Dominic and Francis of Assisi would. Mr. Huxley or Mr. John Morley would be more out of sympathy with Luther than either of them would be with Pericles. But, just as there is an increase of temperature from January to July, and a decrease from July to December, though a warm day in January or December may sometimes be as warm as a cold day in July, so there is a change in the progress of the ages—a change which some may assimilate to the first of these and some to the second, but which, one way or another, none can ignore. The change would generally be summed up in the word ‘progress’—we can, indeed, hardly find another word to describe it—although the implied decision that the progress is in the right direction is not accepted by every one. I remember it being abjured, to my great surprise, by Mr. Froude. I know not whether he has ever maintained in print a view which seems so much out of keeping with the general tenor of his work, but it was certainly serious at the time, now far remote, at which he expressed it to me, and it is one in which he was not absolutely singular. But belief in the change, with or without satisfaction in it, is now universal.

We do not need to open those records of the past which we label as history for proofs of a change in men’s impulses and feelings quite as great as any in their beliefs, habits or knowledge. Men now living may remember, might possibly have fought, a duel. Certainly there is nothing in which people *less* differ than in their objection to a violent death. Yet a number of people who in our own time would be quite incapable of an act requiring so much nerve, were ready, less than a hundred years ago, to stand to be shot at. It was at least as dangerous to fight a duel, in the days when duels were a reality, as it is to jump into the water to save a drowning person, and we may surely say that most people would rather save a life than destroy it; yet not all those who in former days would have



fought a duel would now jump into the water to save a drowning person. We do not explain the change in ascribing it to the influence of public opinion. What makes public opinion? It is not as if one set of persons somehow made another set of persons go and fight; it was a practice which society imposed upon itself. Nor can we say that the progress of knowledge had much to do with the abandonment of a practice which lingered only among the classes attending the universities. We may say that the decay of duelling is a result of the spread of humane feeling, or of the shrinking of military feeling; both statements are true, and each is incomplete. In either case, it is an illustration of that principle of evolution, so strangely ignored till it was universally accepted, by which men's desires and emotions change from generation to generation, whether the change be regarded as loss or gain.

It is difficult to realise that the recognition of anything so obvious is recent. But much publication of new truth is, in fact, an illumination of the obvious; certainly this is true of the doctrine of the Origin of Species by Natural Selection. That more animals are brought into the world every year than can survive to leave offspring, that those who do survive to leave offspring must be the fittest to survive, that their offspring inherit more or less of those characteristics which fit them to survive—these are not opinions. They may be described as a string of truisms. Some were always felt important truths. Long before the publication of *The Origin of Species* the moral bearing of heredity weighed with any wise master who engaged a servant, with any wise father who sanctioned a marriage; other things might outweigh it, but there it was. The resemblance of child to parent is, indeed, even more moral than it is intellectual. A father cannot bequeath his knowledge otherwise than by giving his son the opportunity of learning, as he might give it to any one else. He may not, it is true, bequeath his ideal of conduct—a Marcus Aurelius may leave a Commodus as his heir—but the very conspicuousness of that contrast marks it as exceptional. To ponder over the fact that every

generation transmits to its successor some feelings and impulses derived from its predecessor is to discern the bearing of moral evolution. No one ever denied the facts, though, as translated into theory, they revolutionised the world of thought.

The influence of a new philosophy is a complex thing, and may be stated, from different points of view, with what looks like inconsistency. If Buckle were living now, he might point out the moral vicissitude of the closing century as a striking illustration of what he had meant to say, though he would have to modify his dialect in expressing it. 'Was there ever a greater change produced in the moral world,' he might ask, 'than that which resulted from the Darwinian theory of creation?' or, as he would doubtless have expressed it, from a knowledge of a true method of creation. And in whatever else we might disagree with him, we could not deny that the change, which may be briefly described as the substitution of a world making for a world made, was the greatest in our intellectual history. It was an alteration similar to that by which the law regulating the movement of an apple or a falling leaf was recognised as regulating also the movements of worlds vastly greater than our own. And in that case also a moral accompanied an intellectual revolution. The astronomers who, in the picturesque and homely words of Mr. Huxley, 'swept the cobwebs from the sky,' swept away much besides. The old mediæval conception of the earth, with the heavens above and a dark world below, though it had undergone much modification before the time of Newton, embodied and typified a whole system of ethics, which was destroyed only with the 'cycle and epicycle, orb on orb,' to which Milton alludes in the very crisis of their disappearance. The ideas of the moral world have been almost as different, since the time of Newton, as the ideas of the physical world. Everybody knows, more or less, what is meant by the spirit of the eighteenth century; it has come to be a synonym for criticism, scepticism, disbelief. How much of this is a result of the vast change which revolutionised men's conceptions of the physical universe is not equally a



matter of general agreement; but there was surely some connection between the two things. The revolution which discarded what ordinary common-sense had assumed, which taught men to invert the conceptions of tradition, and believe that the seeming stationary body was whirling rapidly—the seeming motion was imaginary; this taught men also to call in question all their inherited views, it stimulated the mental act of rejection, it gave new theory the prestige of a recent and glorious victory. With that victory, the antithesis of heaven and earth disappeared alike from the physical and moral world. From one point of view heaven itself disappeared. The high ‘above’ changed to the wide ‘around’; the words ‘above’ and ‘below’ lost their meaning. How wonderfully linked are the sensible and the spiritual worlds! We may repeat what has just been said of the former with almost equal applicability to the latter. The high and the low, to a great extent, lost their meaning here also. Earth, in its new brilliancy, attracted men’s whole attention.

The change which took place then is strikingly analogous to that of our own age. What the discovery of gravitation did for space, that the discovery of evolution did for time. As under the influence of the first a law supposed only terrestrial expanded to fill the universe; so under the influence of the second, a process supposed complete in the six days of Creation, expanded to fill the ages of our planet’s existence. The first change cancelled the antithesis of heaven and earth, the second change cancelled the antithesis between Creation and that unmiraculous condition which we supposed to have followed it. The stationary world vanished as the dark world had vanished, and we found ourselves the spectators of creation as men had found themselves the inhabitants of a star. Of conceptions so vast as these it is difficult to say that they are *merely* anything, but, so far as we can concentrate our attention on their limits, we may say that the views of the universe introduced both by the Newtonian and the Darwinian science are purely intellectual. Yet there is no reasonable doubt that both register a moral change.

All who ponder over the history of thought will allow that at the time when this earth was seen itself to be one of 'those wandering fires which move in mystic dance,' the secular interests of men took a new importance. If we turn from the great men of the seventeenth century—Cromwell, Milton, Jeremy Taylor, Bossuet, and Fénelon—to the great men of the eighteenth—Walpole, Locke, Pope, Voltaire, and Rousseau—or even to such survivals of the elder spirit as Berkeley and Butler, we feel that life has taken a new colouring, untinged by the hopes and fears that are associated with eternity. The moral transformation is not an unquestionable gain, the intellectual acquisition is a triumph of truth, and yet surely these two changes are not unrelated. The new world was a suitable environment for the new race.

But far more is this true of the moral change produced by the idea of evolution. An alteration regarding time is a more spiritual thing than an alteration regarding space. The principle of evolution concerns the whole future as well as the whole past. We cannot say it was active up to a particular date and then ceased working, nor can we say it is true of man's bodily organs and not of his soul. It is simply the name for creative activity everywhere and always. Such a conception cannot suddenly conquer the world without producing a moral result. The stir created by *The Origin of Species* was caused not merely, I think not chiefly, by the enforced surrender of the first two chapters of Genesis. It was the half-conscious recoil of a traditional morality from a new influence pregnant with revolution. From the first it was possible to discern that the new doctrine concerned not physical life alone. The Sabbath benediction under the light of evolution appeared in the future; the history of our planet traced a slow approach towards the golden age which had vanished from the past, every generation seemed to measure a step towards a clearer vision as well as a more complete development, and we might mark our approximation towards a better condition by the mere process of comparing dates. This, at least, was the first aspect of the new doctrine as it appeared under the guise of 'the



survival of the fittest.' A principle which traced all development to accumulated variations from an original type added some inferences not indispensable to every theory of evolution. If the origin of new species was to be sought in the eccentricity of individuals, a potential sanction seemed impressed on what had been regarded as transgression and mutiny. Variation being regarded as the instrument of creation, the *direction* of variation appeared a secondary matter. What was wanted was experiment. The action of Eve ceased to be a sin and became a duty. To adhere to the standards of the past was to arrest development. The burden of proof was thus shifted from him who would introduce the new to him who would retain the old. *Because* a relation, a custom, a moral attitude was right yesterday, it appeared, under the new light, likely to be wrong to-day. Our goal, then, must now be our point of departure.

Observe how this ideal has modified all that grouping of human relations which forms the framework of duty. We may say, with very little exaggeration, that whatever was a dogma to our fathers has become a problem to our children. We cannot take up a novel or a magazine without finding something called in question which half a century ago seemed as fixed as the stars. Perhaps the Ten Commandments were as little obeyed then as they are now. But their authority was then denied only by a few daring heretics, liable in extreme cases to civil penalties. Now we can hardly point to one which is not habitually and fearlessly called in question. Honour to parents, fidelity to the spouse, reverence to God—all have been denied to be duties; covetousness, theft, murder—all have been denied to be vices or crimes. Socialists in our day believe that it is right to take the money of the rich and give it to the poor—that is, to steal; Nihilists believe that it is right to put kings to death—that is, to murder; and a number of novel-writers and other writers believe, or at least say, that it is right for ill-assorted couples to separate and choose other mates—that is, to commit adultery. Is it advisable that husband and wife should be united by a permanent bond? that the act

which makes them one should be irreversible? or is change here to be always an open question? To debate this in the past was to start a daring heresy. Now it is to apply the principle of evolution. The whole question of sexual relation has thus, for the fashion of the hour, entered the realm of experiment. When we turn those fictitious pictures of life which reflect the most important moral assumptions of a time more clearly than any transcript from experience, we find that a certain fearlessness in disregarding what used to be felt the limits of permissible frankness is now as sure to make a novel widely read, even if it be not remarkable for talent of any kind, as in former days it was sure to keep it from being widely read, even if it were remarkable for talent of some kind. Unreserve is the dividing-line of science and literature, and the sphere in which it is fatal to withhold facts has in this respect encroached on the sphere in which it is fatal not to withhold facts. I remember the great writer, who chose to be known as George Eliot, answering a question of mine about John Stuart Mill's book on the subjection of women by asking me: 'Do you not think Mill's views on such subjects are deprived of much of their importance by his want of attention to physiology?' I thought at the time that she was confronting a great change on its least important side. But the words were both a sign-post as to the direction which was to be taken by fiction and also the explanation of a fashion already discerned to commemorate the defeat of literature as much as the triumph of science.

The change by which the link uniting husband and wife has become a problem to investigate rather than a bond to reverence is not the only case in which the relations of the family have been transferred from the realm of religion to that of sociology. If we turn to the relation of parent and child, the influence of the new ideas is even more conspicuous. This relation was hallowed in former days by an association with that between the human and the divine. It is now as incoherent as the relations of civilised invaders to savage tribes. The notion of obedience being a duty at any



age, is one that is not only weakened, it is, in the eyes of many who most represent the views of the age, almost exchanged for its contrary. Look, again, at fiction. All stories written for the young used to be more or less moral lessons on this duty. There were bad parents as well as good in such stories, for instance, as Miss Edgeworth's; but, bad or good, their children, her readers feel, are under some sort of obligation to obey them. In any modern representative of this class of fiction, on the other hand, the question of obedience hardly occurs. The ways of children are studied and described as the ways of birds; they are interesting, not moral. We are called upon to observe them with a 'wise passiveness.' The very fact that children's dialect is so much more often put in type than it used to be has a certain significance. Imperfect utterance must always have had a charm for the fond hearts of parents, but it would have been thought in former days below the dignity of even childish literature to reproduce it in print. Now we must all be familiar with the endeavour, if we glance at children's books. Children are given us, we think, now, rather to observe than to train. There is, indeed, a sense of responsibility with respect to those who bring them into the world which is something new and a vast moral improvement, but the children, once here, are hardly supposed amenable to direction or control, except such as they share with all the world, and sometimes not even that.

The deliquescing influence of evolution on the moral grouping of the past is even more conspicuous in national than in family life. The nation may appear a more artificial group than the family. None of the three great races of antiquity, whose influence we sum up under the names of Greece, Rome, and Judæa, were what an Englishman means by a *nation*, and the very fact that he cannot find a suitable term to name his own is an expressive exhibition of its comparative novelty, and, to a certain extent, of its precarious tenure. The sacredness of some sort of political unity is probably the oldest sanctity of civilisation, but the passage from the city of

antiquity to the nation of the modern world appears, to many of those whose influence an attempt has here been made to describe, part of a process by which all such limitations as are involved in national existence are to be got rid of altogether. And hence has sprung up a feeling of timidity in dealing with political offences which is almost universal. There is a striking passage in Froude's *History of Henry VIII.* contrasting the earlier and later associations of the word *heresy*. Where our ancestors saw the poisonous weed, we (he says) recognise the first green blades that promise harvest. Almost the same thing might to-day be said of the cognate expression *treason*. Any attempt to disturb the existing conditions of society enlists so much sympathy among us that, instead of being itself a crime, as it was to our fathers, it is often regarded as a palliation of every other crime. The nation has become to be too small an object for loyalty almost before it has ceased to be too large a one.

The world of duty, under this new view of things, has lost its landmarks. We may say that it has lost its organisation. It assumes the group; it started from the relations of father and son, husband and wife; it expands to take in civil relation; and deals with man as member of a family, as member of a nation. Not that the survivor of his race or the exile from his country is unclaimed by duty, but the duties of man to man will be all different if we refuse to recognise the duties of a son to a father, of a husband to a wife. Now this to some extent is what has actually happened. The family in the view of the past was an organism. The moral relations of its different members were almost as definite as the physical relations of the different members of the body. Now there is no conception of anything organic in the life of the family. It is as if we gave up the idea that the heart had anything to do with circulation or the lungs with respiration, and began to inquire whether any one organ might not do the work of any other.

The change which has come over the world, vast as



it is, seemed greater a generation ago than it does now. It has here been described as it affected the generation which read, with mature attention, *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* and were led to regard the processes of evolution as adequately described by those words. The transformation takes a rather different aspect for those who look upon it first at a later stage. On the whole, the perplexities of evolution were, for the adherents of a view older than either, the perplexities of Darwinism, and although the converse be not equally true, we need not here take that into account. But as we look backwards we see that what really happened when the *world making* was substituted for the *world made* was less a change of beliefs, though it was largely that, than a vast and legitimate transfer of human attention. I have recalled a remark of George Eliot's bearing on the new importance of physiology in its relation to morals. I should like to add a similar reminiscence which few readers, I imagine, will consider too trivial to repeat here. She told me once that, before beginning a new story, she made a study of many circumstances which few would think of connecting with the acts and characters of her fictitious creations, and she laughed as if she were quizzing herself as she added, 'Even the physical geography of the country where the scene is laid.' She might at that moment have been one of her own critics lamenting the over scientific and almost pedantic colouring of her later work. The minute attention to outward scenery which these words imply does not of itself bear on the right or wrong of any action, but this sense of a physical background, always present to imagination, gives moral reflection a new keynote. The *influence of the environment* has in our time taken a wholly new importance and scope; the philanthropist, the legislator and the judge have all been obliged to study anew the scenery of life, and the importance of that which is in no sense scenery has been, in proportion, inevitably diminished. Men have been transported to a world where everything tends to shut out the meaning of the word *ought*. An interesting account of

that journey of Buckle's in the East which ended his life, given by his companion, mentions his exclaiming, after meeting with some instance of ignorance and indifference to knowledge, 'I think I hate that state of mind worse than crime.' Perhaps he spoke more truly than he knew. There is an inherent antagonism—prophetic, like many other antagonisms, of a close union—between a disinterested search for truth, and that spirit which groups mankind in the family and the nation. They are separated by an inverted attitude to that principle which we know as faith. The moral world is the world of faith. The scientific world is the world of verification. If a husband begin to make experiments on the fidelity of a wife, their union is at an end. If a chemist refuse to make experiments on the truth of a theory, his science is at an end. Where one kind of activity begins the other must finish. We cannot regard at any moment with equal attention what ought to be and what is; it is impossible, while we are seeking to catalogue the contents of existence, to observe any other connection than that of cause and effect. Hence the scientific antagonism of true and false withdraws attention from the moral antagonism which it so closely resembles, of right and wrong, and substitutes another focus which spoils the eye for the first.

But the influence of evolution, we are beginning to see, has been to light up the meaning of faith no less than to expand the scope of knowledge. While the whole world lived, speaking broadly, under the influence of religion there was no need to inquire how much human duty rested on the principle of faith, because the very root of human duty was fixed there. Under a scientific régime many have awakened to the discovery that faith is no merely theological virtue, but the basis of all true human relation. Who does not feel Imogen's ready admission of Iachimo's plea for pardon—that his attempted seduction was an experiment authorised by her husband—a blot on the delineation of her wifely devotion? The true wife, we feel, would disbelieve the plea, or receive it with anguish, in which love must perish. Yet, what



does one human being mean when he, or she, says to another, 'You ought to have trusted me'? Surely not, 'You ought to have thought me infallible.' There is no one capable of any real love, anything more than a mere fondness for his own belongings, who is not sometimes forced to realise that trust is a duty, because, as exercised towards finite beings, it is a *creative* act. Any approach to that state of mind on scientific ground (and it is a state of mind not so impossible as it seems) is the only deadly crime that science knows. To say 'I will not doubt' is, on the one ground, the beginning of life; on the other, the beginning of death. It is impossible that the one state of mind should be suddenly stimulated without a pause in the activity of the other. The correlation of forces is one of those vast truths which hold good in the spiritual as well as in the physical universe. The sudden quickening of thought is the partial deadening of feeling. We see it on the ground of history; such eras as the Renaissance show its meaning on a large scale; we feel it also as a simple truth of individual experience. How many have plunged into some intellectual work to deaden mental anguish, or, again, have felt it the bitterest result of mental anguish that it rendered intellectual work impossible. Men who give their lives to intellectual work are about as much removed from animal temptations as from spiritual aspirations. To lead thought is to be occupied with interests which shut out both. But the leaders of thought are also arbiters of legitimate desire, and when the old restraints are removed it is not interest in science which will everywhere replace reverence for a conventional standard. The pleasure of experiment may mingle with other pleasures, but will not among the many suffice to bridle and supplant them. Buckle's remark was the expression of a person probably himself incapable of crime. But it was the utterance of a feeling that might very well increase crime. And some discernment of this important truth, I doubt not, animated the opposition which met and embittered the triumph of evolution.

The remark that some moral disturbance is the price

paid for every sudden intellectual advance may seem rather a truism than a paradox, although it be often neglected. But more has been urged here than that the ideas of evolution have been perturbing to the morality of our time; certain moral changes—disastrous changes, if the traditional view of Christendom be any test of moral disaster—have been traced to certain intellectual ideas—true ideas, if the adherence of all leaders of thought in Christendom be any test of truth. It is not only a deserted standard, but to some extent an inverted standard, which an attempt has been made to connect with new truth. The endeavour seems, at first sight, to confuse all that we have believed most firmly, both as to the influence of truth and the ground of morals.

The sudden publication of new truth is like the shock of some vast earthquake which should substitute for a tranquil lake the rush of rapid streams in opposite directions. It reveals to men doubts and convictions which it could never create—doubts and convictions which have slumbered in their own hearts, and which the shock awakens to vivid life, but on the existence of which it has no bearing whatever. Is man the one source of volition and purpose in our world, or is he the creature and offspring of volition and purpose? Is his life here the sum of its duration, or its seed-time for a harvest reaped elsewhere? These are questions which have never been unasked, but which half a century ago were asked only in whispers. Our time has heard them both asked and answered fearlessly; the problems they open have been expressed in homely or fashionable language, and discussed, or at least decided, by the ignorant and the thoughtless. The libraries which are filled with the records and speculations of evolutionists contain absolutely no data for answering them. Nothing that is true of the mode of creation can either prove or disprove the existence of a Creator. But half a century ago the proof seemed given in the mere fact of national adherence and supported by the corroboration derived from all the framework of society. Those who mistook the mere acquiescence in this national assent for faith in God have



exchanged that acquiescence, according to their temperament, for vigorous denial, careless neglect, or consistent and careful ignoring; while by some a faith in the nation has been exchanged for the faith of the nation. Which result has been more common in our day it would be an audacious thing to attempt to decide, and perhaps the decision, if it were possible, would not be very important. The battle will not be decided by the numbers of those who at the first shock ranged themselves under the opposed battalions, nor, indeed, by numbers at any time. At first this test was peculiarly misleading. What was swept away was vast, and intricately woven in with the web of moral convictions; what was substituted seemed inadequate to fill the chasm, and at the same time had much that tended to widen it. For it cannot be denied that the doctrine of Natural Selection is bewildering to the seeker for a moral order. The method of creation, thus explained, is unlike any humane dealings with sentient beings, or, indeed, with any economic principles of dealing even with non-sentient nature. But it is somewhat surprising and very instructive to note the vast moral influence of a doctrine which merely opened men's eyes to the world as they had always known it to be. The doctrine of Creation, in this respect, all in it that was trying to faith, did no more than mirror the facts of creation as we see it around us now, and force upon the unthinking a conviction, long familiar to any one who attended to inexorable fact, that the government of Infinite Wisdom cannot be explained or imitated by finite wisdom; that there are dealings with the human that become devilish the moment they cease to be divine. If a man cannot accept this conviction, then for him Atheism is the only rational creed. But these are the alternatives of experience, obvious and unquestionable. With the difficulties of evolution they have nothing to do.

The difficulty in the way of any Christian acceptance of the idea of evolution—the fact that two millennia after the Divine took human shape, we live in such a world as we see around us—this difficulty was just as forcible when we thought the creation began on a Sunday,

about the time that we now assign to the building of the Pyramids, as it is now. There was just the same recoil from views which emphasised unquestionable fact then as now; it was, indeed, brought forward far more aggressively against Malthus than it ever was against Darwin, that the doctrine which from a different point of view we have known as that of Natural Selection ignored a Creator. That doctrine merely turns up the gas, as it were, on facts which a man must be a lunatic to deny. If Christianity involves that spirit of slumbrous optimism which insists on keeping dark corners in our view of the world, then assuredly it must perish before the growing light. But already the nightmare dream is past. As in the fine image of Berkeley, the fountain curve of scepticism begins to revert towards its source. It has been already a part of the influence of science—illustrating the truth that the knowledge of contraries is one—to light up the meaning, though it can never affect the grounds, of that which we know as faith.

For it is a poor and timid claim for the beliefs that lie at the basis of all others that they may be *harmonised* with those which seem to contradict them. They must, if they be the reflex of eternal realities, stand to all other beliefs as the gnarled oak roots to the acorn. Whatever be the truth of evolution, it must be a truth concerning that which is deepest in man. And that doctrine, in its most negative aspect, has brought home to every thinker the truth that Christianity, if it be the teaching of a divine being, must have a future. It is strange that it should be necessary for us to take up this idea from a new quarter. But erroneous notions as to this further development and their inevitable renunciation by any one who looks back through the vista of history have caused this anticipatory attitude of faith to be forgotten, and men have been satisfied to look to a distant heaven for all that the words of Christ would lead us to anticipate on this earth. When the stir and rush of new ideas have passed into acquiescence, and the débris of shattered prejudice has been cleared away, it will be seen that if the name Christianity appears unsuitable to the phase



of faith embodying the new discernment it will be only because we have associated that name with limitations which oppose themselves to the idea of growth, and force us to take up an attitude towards the past incompatible with that atmosphere of promise which the ideas of evolution spread everywhere around us. But in truth it is only that later form of Christianity which we know as Protestantism to which these ideas are strange. The elder Church embodies an idea of development which it has neither exhibited nor enforced, but in which, latent and confused as it is, perhaps lies no small portion of its mystic charm and its enduring dominion.

At all events, the attitude which averts attention from any new revelation or expansion of spiritual truth finds no warrant in the words of Christ; some of those words contain a warning and protest against such an attitude. Evolution speaks of a progress from the plant to the animal, from the animal towards the human. Christianity speaks of a progress from the human towards the divine. It has often been interpreted as if the approximation between the human and divine were an exceptional event, a vast miracle interpolated in the sequence of history, to which we could only look back with awe and faith, or of which, if we anticipated any recurrence, we must again teach ourselves to believe in something out of harmony with the natural events of every day. If we could read the New Testament without prejudice we should at least there find nothing of this spirit of limitation. We should indeed recognise that the divine, in its perfect incorporation with humanity, produces results of which its imperfect incorporation in humanity affords neither reminiscence nor prophecy, but a refusal to convert this discernment into a dogma of separation between the divine and human would find clear warrant on the ground of science. Look at a steam-engine rushing by with a weight behind it that an elephant could not cause to stir. Every time the sun shines on water we see a far-off approach to the production of that power by which the weight is moved. But as long as the thing which is heated remains *water* we find no hint of its latent powers.

It may be what our sensations would confuse with boiling water and still fail to reveal the mighty agent which has transformed our civilisation. There is a point at which water is saturated with heat; we give it then another name, and it has other properties and other powers. Whether we may say that it is another thing then is a matter of dialect. What is certain is, that wherever we see water there we see possible steam.

Need we draw out the parallel? Are we not conscious, each one of us to whom the word has a meaning, that he has that within him which is divine? Perhaps, in proportion as frail human beings feel this, they are conscious of the limitations and impotence which startle them by their association with what is best in themselves. A noble soul is consumed with pity for our toiling masses. A great impulse of passionate pity goes out towards them, and the result, so far as human eye can see, is either nugatory or disastrous. He would give his life to heal their ills, and after an attempt to mitigate the lot of a single sufferer, he may decide that it would have been better to do nothing. He reads of one whose compassion healed the sick and opened the eyes of the blind. Is it more bewildering to feel omnipotent compassion at once the same and different from impotent compassion, than to contemplate the same difficulty with regard to steam and water?

To one who objects to the association of the ideas of Christianity and evolution, because two millenniums from the birth of Christ have left the world what we see, it might be enough to ask if the difficulty could not be simply retorted on those who believe only in the last. That a thousand years are to the Creator as one day is what the evolutionist must believe as firmly as the Christian. But we might also ask whether the relative strength both of compassion and of justice in the best men of antiquity and of our own day does not justify the impression that man is nearer the Divine now than he was then. We cannot thus justify any statement whatever about Christianity, because the debate would always remain on which side was cause and on which



effect. What you call Christianity, our opponent might urge, including the history of its founder, is a mere natural result of a widening humanity. But at least the idea that the development of humanity is towards something higher than itself more harmonises with the ideas of evolution than does the assumption that man, being once man, there is nothing beyond. What name we should choose to describe those among our descendants who, rising to their true heritage as sons of God, will recognise all the more that they are sons of man we cannot tell, or whether new desires and new faculties will constitute what we have been accustomed to call a new species. We know that Christ has declared that their miracles will exceed His own. We know, on the other hand, that that invasion of some higher influence, which we may trace within the world of nature, and which thus permeates nature itself with what may be called the principle of the supernatural, is a sudden influence in its manifestation, however gradual in its approach. Cold water is as much and as little expansive as hot water; and to one who dwelt on a tropic island cut off from artificial heat, the conversion of water either to a gas or a solid would be all that we mean by a miracle. Here Nature betrays no tendency till she records an achievement. Does not the life which triumphed over death exhibit that truth as dominant in a higher world? With confidence thus fortified by the teaching of science, as well as by a message speaking to a part of our being which science cannot reach, we venture to look not only for a new heaven, but also for a new earth, wherein dwelleth *righteousness*.

## BIOGRAPHY

AMID the shifting interest which makes a library so different a place to different readers, one department, we presume, will always keep its predominance. The 'Biblia-abiblia' which, for all but the most omnivorous, make up a large proportion of those creamy folios, russet, red-labelled regiments, or heterogeneous contemporary publications, in their crude red and brown cloth, will include very few biographies. Under whatever name—memoirs, letters, journals, reminiscences—the books that aim at revealing an individual character to the world will always number most readers. Their pre-eminence is not, indeed, undisputed. We have known misanthropes who declare themselves to have more than enough of the company of their fellow-men and fellow-women in actual life, and if they must meet them in literature, prefer to have them thrown into masses, so that any further investigation may be repaid by the sense of merit inseparable from the study of history. But these are remarkable specimens of humanity. For most people, the taste for biography is almost the same thing as the taste for reading. To accompany an individual life through its varying phases of blossom, fruit-bearing, and decay, sitting in one's quiet armchair; to pass with the boy to school, with the youth to college, to mark the gradual growth of his fame, his early disappointments, his gradual recognition; to share in his friendships, sympathise with his aims, speculate on the causes of his success or of its limits; and then listen to his last words, and join the company of mourners round his death-bed,—this is to taste some of the pleasures alike of friendship and of fame, with absolutely none of the disadvantages of either. We know a great man, but we have not intruded



upon his time ; we have not approached him with unreasonable demand or unworthy flattery, nor have we earned his attention by any laborious exertions on our part ; we have had his best, and expended nothing of our own in order to gain it. There is something soothing, too, in following out, on a small scale, the different seasons of life. To pass from the flush of hope and the pride of first achievement, through the often disappointing stage of active maturity to the autumn of falling friends and failing powers, and to the yet deeper pathos of the brief winter of repose—Nature meanwhile recording on a small arc of her dial the progress our own life has made to that same goal, showing us a skeleton tracery of dark boughs where autumn's gold and amber tempted us from the opening page ; or setting the legend to an inverted music, and introducing us to our hero's brilliant career under black skies and driving winds, while we carry out the volume to read of his death-bed among the bloom and scent of spring flowers—this is a mental excursion, helpful in many obvious and some unexpected ways. Some calming influence all must have felt from the reflected interests of a large life, mirrored on this small fragment of their own ; the lesson, trite as it may seem, of the comparative importance of what is exceptional by the side of the supreme value of its common elements, comes home with undimmed freshness to the mind of one who reviews it by the light of a completed career. We feel our own heart-beats, as it were, set to the rhythm of a larger measure, we have quitted the limits of our own individual completeness and explored a wide domain ; yet, as we return, the conviction is borne in upon us,—‘ The things we shared are more than the things that divided us.’ ‘ When you are my age, my dear,’ said Sir Walter Scott to his daughter Anne, who had called something vulgar not in his opinion deserving the stigma, ‘ you will thank God that nothing that is much worth having is not common ’ ; and his life preached the lesson more eloquently than the touching words. The appanage of genius, when it is largest, seems a small thing beside the inheritance of humanity.

We have spoken of this as the lesson of a larger life, but we are far from believing that it needs colossal powers to set it forth. Indeed, we are by no means inclined to echo a common complaint of the day, that 'every name which has ever appeared on a title-page is considered a fit subject for a biography.' How far a life is suited for a biography depends on circumstances to some degree independent of the scale of its achievements. It is possible that a great career had better be left unportrayed. Sometimes its own interest is of a kind that should not be revealed, sometimes there is little to say about it but what it has said for itself. And some lives that are anything but great are full of interest in the hands of a worthy biographer. No doubt, in this respect, affection and sorrow are liable to delusion; yet even in their feeblest effort, where it is perfectly sincere, we find so much of value, that we should have no heart to discourage any fresh addition to the stores. The only question we would ask a biographer, even of an obscure life, is, '*Can you tell your story?*' Every one who aims at setting forth another life to the public, unless from some low motive, has probably within him something that others would be thankful to receive, could he really transfer it. What he thinks it worth while to write they would think it worth while to read, if they really read what he aimed at writing. The truth is, that what is needed for a Biography is not so much exceptional power or exceptional beauty, as exceptional illumination. The most ordinary life, could we really *see* it, would be full of interest. Could we penetrate the thick fog which enfolds the true history of each one of us, and witness the drama of wish, hope, and effort which goes on behind that opaque curtain, we should not miss the interest of remarkable incident, or even remarkable achievement; the ordinary vicissitude of aspiration and disappointment, love and grief, would be quite enough for us. But it is not even those who have thus penetrated who can lift the curtain for others. The lessons drawn from the joys and sorrows of an average life can be reproduced, for the most part, only on the pages of fiction; and if we are to have light enough to paint an individual career, we



must generally seek our subject on the heights. And yet exceptions will not fail to occur to most readers, and there is none who would assert that the interest inspired by biographies bears any proportion to the value of that which their subjects have bequeathed to us through other channels. What should we remember of Johnson, without Boswell? The biographer there *created* the interest for every generation but his own. The rugged and massive individuality which has become familiar to so many thousands of readers, is endeared to them by qualities of which elsewhere than in that biography they have few hints. From Johnson's writings we should know but little of the man whose uproarious enjoyment of his own very small jokes affects us as the finest wit, whose tenderness towards the poor and the despised peers out amid his roughness like Alpine flowers, whose very rudenesses are remembered as the preliminaries to what might be taken for the model of a manly and simple apology. And if the most famous delineation in all biography is thus, as it were, only accidentally connected with any pre-eminence but that very strength of individuality which is its own object, one does not see why such delineation should not at some time dispense with all independent eminence and reveal through its loving portraiture a character for the knowledge of which we were dependent on the painter alone. But as a matter of fact, such a portrait has never yet been, and it is not very probable that it ever should be painted. We are reminded of the possibility only by seeing the very different degrees in which lives equally important in every other respect lend themselves to the art of the narrator.

It is in the interest of what we feel the most instructive and delightful of all forms of literature, that we would protest against a growing tendency which, originating in the desire to enrich this fairest parterre in our garden, seems to us to bid fair to choke it with weeds. We have, on several occasions, called the attention of our readers to what we feel to be one of the great dangers of our time,—its increasing disinclination to reserve. There is no department of life which does not seem to us to have

lost something of its dignity by this tendency, but that which it has most hurt is that in which we have all the keenest interest,—the narratives of life, either revealed by those who are the subjects of the narrative, or by others. Do not let us be misunderstood. Biography, which is but a part of history, if it is to have any value must contain the materials for moral judgment; and if it is not a transcript from fact, these materials are worthless. We would not only concede, we would urge, that the biographer should give a complete portrait; and it would not be difficult to point to instances where an interesting and valuable biography loses something of its interest and its value, because the biographer has resolved to see only that part of his subject which was noble and memorable. If we are to represent a man's character, we should represent it fully. But the question is whether you do represent a man's character more fully by putting every scrap of information about him on record. We can imagine a literary condition in which we should protest against the timidity which would curtain round a great man's character from any breath of censure, and the untruthfulness which would retouch the copy of some actual features from a cast of the Apollo Belvidere. Only this condition, surely, would be the very opposite of ours. It is possible to fall on the right hand, but when we are so far to the left, it would be better to get nearer the ditch on that side. We should make a great step, as things are, if we conceded that we are not miraculously guarded against any infringement of the sphere of silence when we meddle with print. Nobody questions that, while truth is always valuable, it is yet possible to tell one person what should be left unspoken, and we urge no more than that it is possible to do the like by several hundreds. There is no magic in printer's ink, that it should filter away whatever would be felt unsuitable for ordinary ink. Surely there are several grounds on which true things should be left unspoken. We should go so far as to allow that there are some biographies, and some of much interest, which ought not to have been written, though probably this would never be the case with the



biography of a great man. The proportion of objection changes altogether, when it is a question of revealing more clearly to the world the character of one who has already opened the door to such revelation. Byron's profligacy, for instance, would have been a reason against undertaking the biography of a man of lesser fame. And there are other reasons why we should be proportionately more careful, as we unveil the lesser lives; the life of a great man needs no adventitious interest, but it is often possible to put a more private career in a picturesque light by some hint that unveils a vista which it is not legitimate to explore. This is a kind of cheap effectiveness which reviewers are quite as much in danger of pursuing as are authors; and, indeed, the tendency we deprecate takes in the field of personal remark and narrative in the periodical literature of the day quite as much as that of literature properly so called.

It is interesting and instructive to note the connection of this tendency with what many would consider the most valuable influence of our day. Physical Science, colouring the speculations and moulding the dialect of those who are ignorant of all in it but its most obvious and rudimentary laws, has gradually absorbed to itself that ideal of *orthodoxy* which belonged, in the days of our fathers, to a wholly different region. In the world of literature, this influence has told, among other ways, in setting up a standard of what is generally called truth, but what we would rather call accuracy, which must perforce somewhat blunt and deaden that instinct which demands, not that information should be given accurately, but that it should not be given at all. In itself, this scientific standard is most valuable. If we accustom ourselves to remember and record the facts of experience and history with the accuracy needful to any scientific record, we are materially helped on our way to that mortal virtue which we know as truthfulness; and we should suppose, as a matter of fact, that a man of science would, except under some temptation to which he might give a plausible aspect, be rarely untruthful. At the same time, we think that both the duty of accuracy and the duty of truthfulness will be

better observed, when they are seen to be distinct. It is possible to convey an absolute falsehood through the most perfect accuracy. We have known a friendship ended by an accurate repetition to an accused person of part of his friend's indignant defence of his conduct. It may be objected that in such a case a partial repetition was not accurate. But to pass by the consideration which surely the imagination of every reader will illustrate, that even the complete repetition *to* a man of what is said by another *of* him, in defending him from a grave imputation, would rarely fail to betray some concession the true bearing of which he could not but misunderstand—to pass by all this, it is still true that, to identify completeness and accuracy in moral narrative, is to concede the difference we are urging. Who shall say when he has the whole account of any moral transaction before him? And, on the other hand, who would feel any perfectly accurate account of some physical experiment misleading, because he knew that he had more to learn about it? The 'whispering tongue that poisoned truth,' in the case we recall, was not incorrect. Even in cases where there is no blame of any kind, do we not often feel, after some accidental betrayal of the kind, such as a letter read by a person whom it blamed, that the interests of truth would be best consulted by oblivion of whatever has been seen? Human imagination does not suffice to translate the moral effect of censure from the third person to the second. In such a case, and in many others, truth on the lips is falsehood in the ears. Truth about things is capable of no such duality, and a standard of accuracy cultivated by the search for it is so small a part of that regard for moral truthfulness which we need in order to give a picture of character, that if we here depend upon it as adequate, it becomes wholly misleading.

Even in the mere question of proportion, how different are the two regions! In the outer world, you can mention no single fact, however trivial, which is not valuable, as far as it goes. This plant, which I find described as bearing only blue or pink flowers, was in a single specimen found by me perfectly white. That is a piece of informa-



tion about the flower. But how much accidental knowledge of human beings is misleading? You met an eminent man at dinner many years ago, and remember nothing about him but that he looked very much annoyed at having to carve a haunch of venison, he being, meanwhile, one of the most generous of men. At least, it might be said, that proves him to have cared too much for the pleasures of the table. True, but how much else you must tell, to put that fault in its true proportion! You would never require thus to surround any mere physical fact with a mass of apparently contradictory facts, in order to reduce it to its proper insignificance. A trifle is a trifle in both regions. But a trifle does not put us on a wrong track in the world of physical science, as it may in the moral world. And yet, how often it brings in some picturesque or humorous element, which adds readability to a narrative! It is not every one who is above profiting by this questionable source of flavour to his style.

The change in the conception of Biography on which we are remarking is mainly this,—that in former days, a biography was consciously and avowedly an account of that part of the life, and of that only, with which the public was supposed to have any concern. It was in one sense a more partial ideal. And yet in another sense it was a more complete ideal, for it proposed to narrate nothing that could not be narrated fully. It set its subject further off, but for that very reason it could give the whole figure. The new ideal, that everything that can be told about a hero should be told, is really a much more fragmentary conception, for it takes in much that it is impossible to give completely. We now know much about him that in former days we should not have known, but probably, in many respects where formerly our minds would have been a blank, they are now filled with misconceptions. It is true that the change is as much in the subject as in the medium; life is less draped altogether. If life be also better understood, perhaps the gain may be worth the loss. But the theory that reserve is hostile to truth, is the very thing we are protesting against. We

are far from thinking this change of feeling an unmixed loss. Some of the most interesting and some of the most popular books of our time owe their existence to an instinct which our forefathers, probably, would never have felt; and if we owe it to this, that two brothers have told us, in independent narratives, how they parted on the watershed of thought, and dwell beside oceans separated by half the world, while the same instinct has made the Sovereign more known and beloved by the humblest of her subjects, we must allow that there is something to be said for the new fashion. Still, it is well to recognise the dangers of a growing taste, which provides its own nourishment. The belief that all a biographer has to consider is what his readers will receive with interest, tends to develop that which, on a small scale, we call a love of gossip, and which, in its fullest development, is the very antithesis to modesty, to refinement, to all that gives dignity and softness to human relation. Some people will think this not too heavy a price to pay for all that it gives us. We think that here, as elsewhere, it might surely be possible, to some extent, to separate the good and the evil; and the first step towards this is to recognise the disadvantages, even if we feel, on the whole, that they are overbalanced by the gain.



## THE RELATION OF MEMORY TO WILL

AMID all the varied general interest of the great *cause célèbre* of our day—the Tichborne Trial—perhaps the most distinct and important was the light thrown by it on people's different ideas of what it was possible to remember and to forget. When the trial was under general discussion, the contrast, or possibly the resemblance, between the powers of oblivion demanded for the Claimant, and those which A and B were conscious of possessing, were matters of frequent mention, and most of us gained some knowledge of the different distance to which the past recedes in different lives. Hardly any knowledge can be more interesting or more fruitful, whether we consider its bearing on the moral atmosphere of the persons thus differently affected, or on the suggestion so expressively conveyed in the German name for memory—*Erinnerung* (the *inward* faculty). Plutarch, in an attempt to vindicate the possible knowledge of the future, by showing the mysterious element in our knowledge of the past, calls memory 'the sight of the things that are invisible, and the hearing of the things that are silent'; and a thinker, whose great metaphysical achievement was almost avowedly the obliteration from our mental inventory of all those powers which are supposed to deal with the invisible, recalls this description, in his confession that the analysis which reduced every other source of apparently ultimate knowledge to a trick of association was checked when we came to that within us which bore witness to a real past; and the concession that in this case we do know what we cannot prove, seems to us a pregnant one. *How* we know that these dim pictures on our walls—at once faint and indelible—are the work of

another artist than imagination, must, J. S. Mill allows, be a question as vain as how we know that the things around us are real. But it is under its personal aspect that we would speak of memory to-day.

Apart from some such test as the Tichborne Trial, we are curiously ignorant of the different aspects of the past to different minds. One would have expected, perhaps, that we should discern any idiosyncrasy in this region clearly enough. A good memory may be avowed without vanity, and a bad one confessed without shame, while the exigencies of practical life are continually confuting or confirming the claim or the confession. But as for the test at all events, and we suspect as to the self-revelation, it belongs exclusively to the recent past, and concerns rather what we should call the materials for memory than memory. A man would say he had a bad memory if he forgot to call for an important letter at the post-office, but there is nothing in such a fact as this to throw any light on his relation to the past. While he is chafing at his forgetfulness, the words—even the insignificant words—of those who have been for more than a generation unseen among men, may be distinct in his inward ear; he may see the flower-beds whence he plucked nosegays with tiny fingers, and feel again the push of a door that taxed his childish strength, on the threshold of a house whose very bricks and mortar have long since been mingled with the dust. And, on the other hand, the most unique and one of the longest lives we ever knew—the life richest in material of the knowledge that would have found an eager listener—was obscured by the profusion of detail in the near past; far off, moved figures known to the historian, but close at hand there were so many of the doings and arrangements of contemporaries, remembered with a really surprising accuracy, that a glimpse at the giants who moved on our sphere when the century was young was hardly discernible through the cobwebs. Of this memory for the distant, we may almost say, in the exaggeration permissible to any short utterance on such a subject, that it differs, with different persons, as a window by day differs from a window by night. To some persons,



hardly anything within the room is so distinct as its prospect. Those far-off hills, that winding road, that distant indication of busy life attracts their eye from open book, or pressing letter, or picture of some far fairer scene within. To others, the past is much what the outlook becomes when the candles are lit. A hasty glance in that direction reveals nothing but the reflection of the observer on the window-pane, and if he opens the window, and makes an effort to look out, still nothing is visible but the dim outline of things close at hand. Yet it is likely enough that for all practical exigencies one of the last class may have a good memory, and one of the first a bad one.

In this region our very silence is misleading. We are silent about what we have forgotten. We are silent also about what we remember most profoundly. '*Rien ne se ressemble comme le néant et la profondeur.*' We are apt to make mistakes both ways. Sometimes we take the silence of oblivion for the silence of profound and overpowering recollection, sometimes our mistake is in the opposite direction; and it is impossible to say which error is the commonest, for the one occurs when the deep mind judges the shallow, and the other when the shallow mind judges the deep. At all events, this misconception is one of the many causes which hide from us the meaning of memory in one mind and in another, and thus curtain off from us the moral background of every life.

We could be far more nearly just to each other, if we realised that with some persons the past years remain, and with others they depart. Take, for instance, the new light thus thrown on the sin of which, perhaps, we can least bear to believe ourselves guilty. Ingratitude, in the sense of an opportunity deliberately neglected to repay a great benefit, we should hope was a crime as rare as it is repulsive, but in the sense of a half-voluntary oblivion of small benefits, of the importance of which it is possible to take very different views, we do not think it is at all uncommon. Now look at it in the light of this intellectual difference between man and man. You are surprised that So-and-so shows no recollection of the kindly dealings

which, having happened at the time when he was nobody, and you were somebody, surely deserved to be remembered. No intellectual explanation can exonerate one who has forgotten a kindness; still it makes a great difference, surely, if the ungrateful person has forgotten everything else that happened at the same time, wrongs to himself included. To him, the long-ago means something it is an effort to see. To you, it may mean something it is an effort not to see. You, perhaps, are imagining him to *see* these past actions of yours, and choose to ignore them, while it needs as great an effort on his part to recall them (to return to our first figure) as to look out from a lighted room. And his loss is not pure loss. His short memory may improve his relations with his fellow-men as often as it injures them;—indeed, men and women, being what they are, it is to be feared rather more often. A generous person dismisses the slight of yesterday to oblivion and recalls the kindnesses that enriched his far-off youth, whatever be the medium through which he habitually views the past. But we shall never know the difficulty in either action without some reference to this medium, and by the same principle we cannot, without such a reference to it, rightly judge him who forgets what he ought to remember, or who remembers what he ought to forget.

Nevertheless, the 'ought' remains. The very illustrations which bring home to us the difficulty of discarding or retaining the past, impress on us also its aspect as a part of duty, and while we shall best understand other lives by realising its difficulty, it is a constant sense of its possibility which we need in order to mould our own. That any one *ought* to remember, indeed, and that recollection therefore is, to some extent, a matter of will, we admit every time we blame a child or a servant for forgetting a message, whatever difficulty we may find in carrying out our own view consistently. But can we say that the possibility of remembering at will involves the possibility of forgetting at will? Because we may make a successful effort to resist sleep, does it follow that we may make a successful effort to resist wakefulness?



There is a natural fitness in effort to produce recollection, is there not also a natural fitness in effort to prevent oblivion? Does not the very desire to forget, imply that we are doomed vividly and permanently to remember? This question was, in fact, one of the great points of interest in the famous trial to which we have alluded. The possibility of obliterating a painful past from the mind was the plea put forward on the part of the person who had, it was asserted, voluntarily reduced certain parts of his life to a blank. 'This possibility,' said the Chief Justice, in that masterly summing-up, which most of its readers must have wished they had made their exclusive source of knowledge of the history, 'will not be confirmed by the experience of most people.' How many, indeed, must have wondered that any other suggestion had not been made in preference to one that defied all their most vivid experience,—that any one should forget a part of his youth *because* it was painful? You might as well suggest that a speech had been unheard by him *because* of the loud voice of the speaker. And what is surprising is that, however ardently we may wish that such and such things had not been, it is wonderfully difficult even to *desire* that they should be forgotten. Whilst the past seems a part of oneself, that clinging to life which belongs to our whole being makes itself manifest in the recoil from oblivion, even with regard to what we would so gladly have avoided altogether. Oblivion is near enough; we approach that time, to borrow the fine, though rather confused, image of Locke, when our memory is to resemble the tombs to which we are hastening, in which, though the marble and brass remain, 'yet the inscriptions are effaced, and the imagery withers away.' We will not go half-way to meet the chill shadow; even pain is less an object of dread than the loss of something that has become a part of our intellectual being.

It is true, there is in the effort to forget, something that seems a sort of intellectual suicide. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which forgetting, we believe, is as much of a duty as remembering. There is such a mental attitude, however difficult it be to describe, and though it

be impossible to give it a single name as turning our back on the past, or on part of the past. Duty has no more despotic claim on any part of our being than on that faculty which surrenders its possessions to oblivion. Doubtless it is impossible to put into words the kind of effort a man makes when he wills to do something which *will*, apparently, has no tendency to achieve. Or rather, perhaps, the effort to move the will is a thing indescribable in words. How can I make myself cease to wish what I do wish?—It must be possible, for it is sometimes the demand of conscience. The past must remain, but we may open the door to something that hides it. The well-known and often-repeated condemnation of the Bourbons—that they had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing, commemorates the general impression, which we believe to be a profoundly true one, that a man must forget in order to remember. There are some things in the history of every man which he must cease to contemplate, in order to see anything else. We remember hearing the biography of one eminent lawyer by another criticised by a third as rendered nugatory by the constant reminder, ‘I have been very much ill-used by him.’ The biographer needed to forget one fact about his hero, in order to state clearly anything else about him. The necessity is seen most clearly in the lives of the great, but it is common to them and their humblest fellow-men.

We believe that hardly anything would do more to open springs of sympathy, and close those of bitterness, than the recognition of our responsibility for what we remember. That it should cease to be true that,—

Each day brings its petty dust,  
Our soon-choked hearts to fill,  
And we forget because we must,  
And not because we will;

—this, we believe, would bring about such a transformation of the moral nature as would resemble, or rather as would supply, new motives for all strenuous action, new dissuasion from all useless thought. It would be something like choosing from out the whole circle of our



acquaintance the wisest and best to be our daily companions, and so occupying our attention with their large and fruitful interests, that all that was small, or futile, or bitter should, under this beneficent encroachment, wither away of itself.

## THE VANITY OF MEN OF LETTERS

AMONG the qualities which make the character of Sir Walter Scott peculiarly attractive, and are not, we believe, by any means without influence on his genius, the foremost place must be assigned to his peculiar, we should say his unique, modesty. The opinion expressed by Mr. Palgrave in his introduction to Scott's poetical works, that this quality is 'often an attribute of intellectual excellence,' seems to us contrary to all we know about men whom every reader may know; and we can account for it only by a theory which may account for a good many generalisations,—that the phenomenon, when it does occur, takes a strong hold upon the mind, and that it is natural to mistake a deep impression for a wide range of impression. What we cannot forget, we imagine ourselves to have often seen. Nothing becomes intellectual excellence as much as modesty. Nor can any man so well afford to dispense with self-assertion as one whose powers set him on an eminence, and when we do see mental eminence combined with self-effacement, we always feel as if the one quality would ensure the other, as we fancy how liberal we could be if we were rich. And yet, for our own part, we are unable to recall another writer to take a place by the poet we have mentioned as both great in the world of letters, and eminently free from vanity. We could mention many men of genius of whom we know nothing in this particular, but generally, when the *character* of a great writer is evident, we should say that this particular grace is missing, and it seems to us worth while to ask what there is, in the nature of things, to occupy a great man's thoughts with himself.

In the first place, we have to ask ourselves what we



mean by vanity. The answer is not obvious. Cicero would, we suppose, be accepted by every one as the remarkable man whose vanity is as remarkable as anything else about him. But is any one prepared to say that Cicero over-estimated his importance in the world's history? Go to the Reading Room of the British Museum, and notice the three heavy volumes of the *Folio Catalogue* filled with the titles of his editors and commentators; there you have a formidable amount of reading occupied with the mere list of works which any one would have to peruse in order to know where to look for even a part of what has been written about him. History has surely accepted his self-estimate as to the space he was worthy to occupy in general attention, if she has not greatly enlarged it. Unquestionably his contemporaries also assented to the large demand. When he gave as his reason for not undertaking a dangerous embassy that his life was far too important to the State to be put in peril, the only difference between his view and that of his bitterest enemies was that they thought his life too important not to be got rid of. It may be said that the peculiarity here was rather the absence of pride than the presence of vanity, and no doubt the impossibility of such a plea to a modern, measures as much the difference of the ancient and modern ideal of manliness as any individual quality whatever. Still, no one could have said such a thing under any standard unless he were inordinately vain, and the fact that it might very well be true and important all the same forces on us the conviction that whatever else we mean by vanity, we do not mean an intellectual mistake about one's own importance.

It has been even said that the great man is apt to under-estimate his own greatness. 'History,' says Mr. John Morley, in his studies on the French Revolution, 'has not suffered so much from the vanity of greatness, as from the incapacity of great men to understand how great they are.' If what has been suggested is valid, it is possible for a great man to underrate his own greatness, and yet be vain. It is, indeed, as difficult to conceive

of the emotion which we thus name in one who feels his unquestionable power to delight and instruct his kind throughout all generations, as to imagine it in the surgeon who hastens to the bedside of the wounded man his art may heal. There is something in uncertainty which tends irresistibly to occupy the mind with self, but we should have thought the absolute consciousness of greatness would have made it impossible. Nevertheless, this just confidence does not always secure its possessor against what we, at least, should call vanity. When Goethe wrote of Byron,—‘This singular intellectual poet has taken my “Faustus” to himself’—in *Manfred*—‘and extracted from it the strongest nourishment for his hypochondriac humour,’ the fact that this statement seems to us erroneous hardly increases our opinion of its peculiar quality. Possibly it was not altogether erroneous. Of course, Byron knew no German; it would not be very likely that a man educated at Harrow and Cambridge would read German now, and it was then almost impossible. Goethe might surely have known that the only word intelligible to Byron in his criticism was the epithet ‘hypochondrisch,’ which alarmed him a good deal till he got the article translated. However, by an unlikely chance, Byron did know something of *Faust*. He had been much impressed by a *vivâ voce* translation read out to him by ‘Monk’ Lewis, who deserves to be rescued from oblivion for his share in introducing German literature to the polite English world. And though any one who will attempt to make a hearer acquainted with the beauties of a difficult poem through the medium of an extemporised translation, will be sceptical as to the moulding influence of the lecture on his hearers’ mind, and Goethe’s admission that Byron ‘has made use of the impelling principles . . . so that not one of them remain the same,’ seems to us to justify such scepticism in this particular case; still it is possible that, with the insight of genius, Byron did pierce the imperfect medium, and gather nourishment from the rich pasture. We should, however, not the less consider it curious that the chief thing one great poet has to tell his countrymen about



another is, that he has borrowed successfully from himself. To any man not of first-rate eminence, of course, the conventional dialect of modesty would render the criticism impossible. William Lisle Bowles, a writer only known to this generation by one or two graceful sonnets, and by Coleridge's sonnet to him, really had, as many a second-rate man has on many a first-rate man, an appreciable influence on the poet who thus nobly requited it, yet it would be felt an evidence of gigantic vanity if in criticising Coleridge he had alluded to his own influence upon him. And we cannot see that, in this respect, mental rank makes any difference. Out of all that Goethe might have pointed out in *Manfred* to the German world, his choice of the traces of his own influence seems to us a proof of a strange distortion in what concerns the self to which we know not what other name to give than vanity.

In what has been said, we have had in contemplation exclusively the temptations of the productive mind; it would be quite false of one easily confused with the productive mind. No one is so little tempted to vanity as the student. The constant endeavour to apprehend the thoughts of other minds is only surpassed as a shelter against any distortion in regard to self by the highest and holiest motives of the spiritual life. Perhaps the memory of the reader supplies him, as the memory of the writer does, with some example of this student-life, making in its combination of profound modesty and profound learning so distinct and so indelible an impression on the page of memory that it is difficult to pass it by, when he would turn back to allied and distinct records in the same volume. He may remember some inhabitant of a library loved for its own sake, and not as the workshop for the production of more books, one whose rich stores of knowledge, accessible to the humblest seeker, were hidden from all but the seeker in the shadow of a quiet self-forgetfulness, and whose unsuspected wealth startled an appreciative thinker here and there, as he discovered in the patient and courteous hearer of glib certainties and surface-knowledge one from whom the

wisest might learn something. The character here described and remembered is indeed akin to the man of letters, but we should say the two would never be united in the same person. He who studies in order to create, and he who studies in order to know, come into different relations with the objects of their study; their advantages are different, their disadvantages still more obviously so. The productive mind is as much tempted to self-occupation as the studious mind is shielded from it.

Perhaps, indeed, it is inevitable for the productive mind. So fatal is the blight cast by discouragement over all production, that we have sometimes fancied an exaggerated estimate of the powers and the work of a literary man by himself almost indispensable, unless he stood in the first rank, to carry him over the difficulties and disappointments of literary effort. Could the absolute self-confidence of Mr. Buckle, for instance, have sustained him as it did, if he had known that in a few years his book would have sunk to the position it now holds in the literary world? And would it not have been a loss that it had never been written? What is ephemeral may be valuable, but clearly discerned as ephemeral, it could hardly be produced at the cost of laborious effort. But it must not be forgotten that the self-occupying tendency of any effort to produce mental work tells on the proudest as well as the humblest sons of literature. Of course it is most apparent when the result seems inadequate to much sacrifice of any kind. 'I am but a poor creature, but if I were provided with a little more encouragement, if I were shielded from these exasperating interruptions, if I were made a little more comfortable, I could do my work so much better.' 'My dear Sir,' the world might reply to most of us, 'the difference between your work at its best and worst, is really not worth the expense you would put us to in sheltering and pampering you.' A man of genius never has the advantage, as we sincerely consider it, of being answered in this way explicitly or implicitly. 'Flattery,' says Lord Chesterfield—and it is one of the few shrewd sayings in the most disappointing book ever written by a wit—'flattery cannot be too



strong for kings.' There are many kings in the world of mind of whom we might almost say the same.

The temptation we speak of is common to all eminence, but it is literary eminence which exhibits it in its most striking form. The great statesman, the great general, is constantly measuring himself against others, and though we have admitted that we do not by vanity mean a wrong estimate of one's own mental stature, yet no one who adequately appreciated the powers of all around him would ever be called vain. The most intense pride is possible in such an atmosphere, but vanity cannot live in it. It may be urged that literature implies a true estimate of other men's work, as much as politics or campaigning; you do not only measure yourself against people when you are trying to overcome them. We incline to believe, on the other hand, that the opinion held by a thinker of his fellows is not valuable in proportion to his genius. The remark often made that Bacon's writings do not contain a single allusion to *Shakespeare* seems to us as striking a support of this opinion as any mere negative fact can be. That Bacon should deal in his *Essays* with subjects which *Shakespeare's* plays were exactly adapted to illustrate and elucidate, and yet show no sign of being acquainted with them, although he was aware that they were the greatest dramatic creations in the world, is indeed possible, but it seems to us far more likely that he thought them not worth attention. His contempt for Copernicus, and Harvey's slighting mention of him, afford us a positive evidence, at all events, that supreme greatness in one line does not quicken the perception of supreme greatness in a different line, even if it be not exceedingly different. And thus the supreme thinker is apt to find himself the most interesting subject of contemplation easily attainable.

We should not, then, let our estimate of the man of letters be lowered by discovering him to be vain, in the same proportion as we cannot help this happening where we meet with vanity in men who are occupied with practical life. Of the two antidotes to vanity—humility

and pride—there is no reason why the man of letters should have more than other men, even if he be also a man of genius, and there are weighty reasons why he should be open to the undignified temptation. If he is a small man, his uncertainty about himself tends to make him vain; and when his intellectual stature precludes this possibility, it opens the way to a universal admiration, which does not cease to be dangerous because it is founded on reason.



## INVALIDS

MISS MARTINEAU'S low estimate of her *Life in the Sick-room* strikes us as a curious (though in this case quite explicable) example of the inability of authors to judge the relative value of their own productions. It is the one of her writings we should place highest. The fresh, pure sense of Nature's homely grace, expressed as it is in so many pictures which owe their charm wholly to the painter, or at least in the originals of which a common eye would find no attraction; combined with an appreciation, which is indeed seldom separated from this taste for Nature, of the pathos of ordinary human life, with its undistinguished joys and sorrows, give the book a refreshing influence which it is curious to find in any volume with such a title. It is, indeed, an eminently healthy book. After saying this, we need hardly add that we cannot accept it as a picture of average life in the sick-room. Though full of shrewd and thoughtful observation, or perhaps because of this wealth, it fails to represent the usual experience of the invalid who,—

‘Gazing round this little room,  
Must whisper, “This shall be thy doom.  
*Here* must thou struggle, here alone  
Repress tired Nature's rising moan.”’

Miss Martineau's experience was, indeed, modified by too many exceptional influences to allow her to feel this trial as it weighs on hundreds and thousands, and perhaps hardly any one who feels it could describe it. However, she was far too clever a woman to write on any subject she understood without giving many sensible hints about it, and although other parts of the book seem to us more

valuable, these suggestions, based on experience, and bearing on one of the most difficult problems of life, form no despicable portion of this particular invalid's legacy to her kind.

It would be a very valuable book which should teach the sick to understand the healthy, and the healthy to understand the sick. No two classes so urgently need this mutual understanding, and perhaps no two classes find it equally difficult. It is very desirable that the rich should be just to the poor, and the poor to the rich, but it is a great alleviation of mutual misunderstanding in this case that the rich and the poor live apart. The sick and the well, on the other hand, are separated not by a dividing-line crossing society, but by a thousand small centres of divergence sprinkled all over it. *This* difficulty divides families and separates friends; it introduces sources of hopeless misapprehension between those who have been intimate from childhood, and who are still, and must continue, in direct outward contact. Moreover, it is not only more necessary for sick and well to understand each other than for rich and poor, it is also more difficult. How misleading are the external suggestions of illness! Who can approach some one lying on a couch, in an atmosphere of stillness and careful order, and not find his imagination filled with the idea of repose? And yet nothing is so unlike any sensation of life-long illness as repose is. Hurry, and over-driven weariness, and distracting annoyances, and all the disasters of an over-busy life, give one far more insight into the condition of an invalid than that which is suggested to us by everything about him. We cannot always remember this paradox, but it does not cease to be true when we forget it.

The great hindrance to an understanding of life-long illness is that every one knows a little of illness, and most people fancy that transitory experience enables them to judge of a permanent condition. No mistake is more natural, but we believe none to be more entire. We can judge about as well of the hardships of poverty from remembering some Alpine journey in which dinner was not to be had when it was much wanted, as we can by



recalling some attack of sharp fever, or the confinement of a sprained ankle, imagine what it is to exchange the interests, pains, and pleasures of this busy world for those of the sick-room. There are two main reasons for this misleading effect of what is transitory. The most important, perhaps, is our inability to represent to ourselves adequately the effect of difference of degree. We are apt to reason about cause and effect as if we could by multiplying a small result arrive at a large result. And yet the every-day lessons of nature are full of warnings against this kind of reasoning. Imagine a logical thinker for the first time learning that a certain degree of cold made water solid; any attempt on his part, short of success, to verify the statement would make it seem more improbable. 'It is true,' he might say, 'we cannot get the thermometer quite so low as what you call the freezing-point, but you see we have come very near it, without detecting the slightest tendency to this startling change from fluid to solid.' The laws of chemistry are a standing protest against this kind of reasoning, and it would be well for every logician to be forced to study them. People are constantly arguing about moral questions in the style of our supposed disbeliever in ice, and we believe nobody can quite shake off the influence of this fallacy in judging of illness. It is wonderfully difficult to realise that the effect of some condition may be different, according as it is permanent or transitory, not only in degree, but in kind. Yet it is undeniable. A short taste of some privations might prove a positive enjoyment; a day of painless blindness, for instance, might prove to a busy worker a delightful rest. Such a person would, after such an experience, be further from knowing what it is to be blind always, than one who had never been blind at all. A short trial of illness, therefore, or indeed of any misfortune, is not only an imperfect means of forming any judgment as to its permanent effect, it is very often the means of forming a wrong judgment. It resembles, in this respect, a slight knowledge of a foreign language. A foreigner, speaking English, once said of Beethoven, whom he had personally

known,—‘He was very brutal.’ The information thus conveyed to an English ear by a veracious and well-informed witness was as correct as much opinion that is founded on a short experience. But in the case of illness, we fear, the reality is ‘brutal’ in English, and not in French.

But in the second place, it is very important, and not very easy, to remember that the actual circumstances of anything permanent are altogether different from the circumstances of anything transitory. There would be abundant sympathy for the ills of life, if they would last only a short time. Many invalids will say that they do not want sympathy, but this is hardly ever entirely true, and it is never true that they do not want what sympathy brings. Eager and devoted attention may sometimes actually lessen suffering, and if this is often not the case, it is undeniable that an atmosphere of tender, absorbing anxiety does make bearable all but the worst and rarest physical ills. Many who can recall some short attack of dangerous illness, preceded and followed by health, will say that no memory is more precious to them. When death and estrangement have done their work, the recollection of hours of feverish pain, in which the patient’s acceptance of food or drink caused more gratitude than all the beneficence of his subsequent career, shines through the vista of cold, loveless years with a radiance that is only partly delusive. That experience did really belong to the struggle between life and death, but it is utterly unlike the experience of the very same physical condition when death and life have alike receded, and that awful, potent, all-healing fear of separation is as remote as the hope and stir that belong to the ordinary course of things in the world. Is it no trial to watch relaxed devotion, and feel it the result simply of the heaviness of the misfortune which first called forth devotion? Let no one plead in answer that the sufferer gets used to pain. His nearest and dearest get used to the thought of his suffering—it is a law of Nature, to which they can but submit—but never let us suppose that the pain of another grows less because we think less about it. It is possible to get used to



privation, and to some kinds of minor discomfort. Any one who says it is possible to get used to pain has forgotten what pain is.

It is wonderfully easy to forget pain. We have often thought there was a sort of witness to immortality in the strange fact that while emotion remembered is, to some extent, emotion experienced, sensation is never really remembered at all. Whatever belongs to the body seems to bear the stamp of mortality,—it passes at once into the region of oblivion when we are delivered from its pressure. How different is the relation of memory to the maladies of the soul! Place the unkindness of long years ago side by side in your recollection with the toothache of last week, and you feel at once you are comparing a living thing and a dead thing. The unkindness, whether remembered by him who felt or inflicted it, is a living reality, potent to reopen and envenom the wound it had made. The toothache is gone, as if it had never been. To this fact, we are convinced, must be traced the common assumption that any degree of bodily suffering would be chosen rather than severe pain of mind. What people mean in saying this is, no doubt, that they would rather *remember* physical than mental pain, and of course a short experience of the pain which leaves no trace is to be preferred to an equally short experience of the pain which leaves a profound trace. But we are considering the case of one who knows that this fierce companion will not quit his side till the clay which gives it its power is laid in the grave,—and no sufferer, we think, is to be set by his side. The deadliest mental anguish allows some respite, when the body claims its due; an undying grief does not prevent faint gleams of pleasure when sleep comes on after fatigue, or hunger and thirst are relieved. But there is no converse to the picture. An unintermittent pain of body, when very severe, leaves room for nothing but itself.

The effort at understanding a state very different from their own, like every other effort, cannot be urged on the sick as it can on the sound. Yet we are far from thinking that it ought not to be urged on the sick at all. Life-long

illness would be, we are certain, more tolerable, if the invalid could realise the difficulties it imposes on the surroundings. Doubtless there is pain in the recognition, and a sort of pain to which there is nothing parallel in the corresponding effort on the part of the sound. But it would save far more pain than it inflicts, in all circumstances, to recognise the cost at which every one puts himself in the place of another. Those who are bustling about in the world must take their neighbours as they find them. They at any moment can change their atmosphere, and they do not carry about a moral thermometer, to see whether it is exactly suited to their taste and temperament, or if they do, they are taught their mistake. The invalid, on the other hand, has a right to demand that you should bring no jarring ideas to an atmosphere he cannot change at will; but he seldom sees that this, like every other peculiar demand, must release some form of energy to compensate for that which it absorbs. The principle of the conversation of force is the greatest help to mutual toleration that the intellectual world can supply, and translated into the language of common life, this scientific expression means no more than the homely adage that you cannot eat your cake and have it. We are always experiencing the truth of this saying, and always forgetting it. It is a constant temptation to believe that any one who behaved rightly would be able to spend great moral energy in one direction, without having less to spend in another. Certainly a man's moral energy is not limited in the way that his purse is. Practically, however, it is limited. Every exceptional claim implies some surrender. The invalid whose nerves must be sheltered, who must have intercourse adjusted to suit him, cannot be looked up to as a source of influence. He must not expect to be at once deferred to as a capable person and sheltered as a weak one.

But one of the greatest difficulties of the sick-room is the absence of those circumstances which help self-appreciation. Most people over-rate themselves in certain directions, but in the jostling of the world most of us are taught our place. The atmosphere of the sick-room, on



the other hand, quite shuts out the possibility of the small checks which make us feel that we have thought too much of ourselves. It is quite evident that Miss Martineau suffered in this way, though perhaps her deafness had as much to do with the result as her ill-health. At any rate, she is a memorable example of the disadvantages of being cut off from the discipline which teaches modesty. No doubt a great deal of the deference which fed her vanity was both deserved and sincere, but probably not all. And with ordinary invalids, there is and cannot but be much illusion as to the interest they inspire, for nothing is so like deference as well-bred compassion. But indeed it has been a truth insufficiently considered, although its causes are obvious, that all influences which isolate the soul tend to give it an undue idea of its own importance. It is hard—we believe almost impossible—for a solitary being to attain humility.

What, we may be asked, in conclusion, is our remedy for all these disadvantages? Or what is the use of dwelling on disadvantages for which there is no remedy? Is it not better to forget incurable ills, till they are forced on the mind by the pressure of experience?

No, emphatically no. The ordinary misfortunes of the world would lose much of their pain if they were distinctly recognised. And although it is true that we do not remove misunderstanding in accounting for it—that we cannot make it otherwise than painful—yet the difference between a pain which we trace to unkindness or selfishness and that which we trace to inevitable mistake, is as great as the difference between the pain of a sprained ankle when we try to stand on it, and when we let it rest on a cushion. The mind loses the bitterness of its sufferings in discerning their necessity, and is sometimes surprised in this acquiescence to find them almost disappear.

## APOLOGIES

WE have sometimes wished that in small social matters it were possible that private persons should be made aware of the impression they produce on their neighbours to the same extent that public men are, and have imagined to ourselves some such officer, on a small scale, as the Speaker of the House of Commons, empowered to watch over social demeanour, and impose on the offender against the laws of good-breeding the expiation of an adequate apology. A good deal that ruffles and chills the surface of intercourse would, if it were acknowledged and regretted, be at an end. Sometimes it would even be changed into an influence for good. Many a little slip of manners, many a momentary lapse of considerateness and self-control, would not only be wiped out by an apology,—it would be often replaced by a pleasing recollection of the frank and hearty expression of regret which always draws people nearer; and such an expression would often be readily forthcoming, if only there were any perception of its necessity, or any easy way of making it. Of course there are offences in which an apology makes very little difference. If a man has abused confidence, or made mischief, then though the apology ought to be made, we cannot promise him that it will reinstate him in the good graces of his friends. The harm here is in the thing done,—the doer's feelings about it are secondary. But in a thousand tiny social offences the proportion is the other way. To speak of one which may seem too small to mention, and yet which is one of the commonest sources of minute social annoyance,—how many a tiny gnat-sting would have all its irritation allayed, if our friend could realise that being kept waiting



is disagreeable, and that he, having caused us this unpleasant little experience, ought to express and to feel regret for it. If this were acted upon, not only would these small offences be often readily forgotten, but also they would be much seldomer repeated. There is a greater influence than we are apt to imagine in any symbol of intention, and an apology, if it were really adequate, would always impress on the mind of its author that he must not make it over again.

This last circumstance, however, is indispensable. If in reward for the originality of our suggestion we were appointed to fill the post we have adumbrated, it should stand as one of the first decisions on our 'Perpetual Edict' that no apology should be made twice. The charming friend who murmurs a gracious excuse, as she takes her seat (for this sort of offence is exclusively womanly, we believe) in a carriage full of sulky people whose tempers have been evaporating for the last ten minutes, should be condemned to keep her regrets to herself. The consolation of supposing herself a pleasing member of society, because she has represented herself as overwhelmed with sorrow for making us miss the appointment or the train, or even put us into a flutter at the chance, should henceforth be denied her. Still more severely should we deal with those curious apologies which take the form of a simple statement of this offence, and which are indeed its usual accompaniment. 'I am afraid we are rather late?' 'You are afraid, indeed! You know you have kept us looking at the clock, and considering whether we might order dinner to be served, for the best part of an hour. You know it perfectly, you knew it would be so when you ordered your carriage, when you kept it waiting, when you stepped into it, and finally, when you stopped at your host's door. Rebuke and exhortation would be wasted on you; your other merits, whatever they may be, may still possibly ensure the hospitality you so liberally abuse; but one thing you shall not do, you shall not go on putting your selfishness into a very inadequate statement, and fancying *that* an apology. The fear which does not influence the most insignificant of

your actions shall be debarred from all influence on your words, for evermore.'

Our most absolute prohibition, indeed, should be made against the form of apology which is much the commonest. There should, under our rule, be a sudden and permanent cessation of all apologies for neglect of social attention. Nobody should be allowed to give the statement that he or she 'has been wanting to come and see you' the aspect of apology. The frequency of this form of attention is a curious instance of the prevalence of egotism, even when people most wish to consider their neighbours. How often does its object with difficulty suppress in answer Mr. Toots's well-known comment,—'It's of no consequence, thank you.' Very often the apology is the first intimation of the neglect. Why are you to force your friend to find some civil paraphrase for 'I was not aware that you had not been to see me'? What answer can be given to these apologies combining truth and politeness, indeed, we are entirely ignorant. There is a ditch on each side the way. You may easily contract too much of Mr. Toots's style, and be too eager to make your friend quite easy as to any intermission of his visits, and this is the side on which we would counsel our readers to be most assiduously on their guard. But if, in your desire to escape this danger, you profess any keen sense of the pleasure of your friend's society, you are enhancing the sin for which he is professing penitence. We really are unable to recommend a suitable formula for a well-bred person on receiving this kind of apology. All the answers which naturally suggest themselves are a rebuke to self-importance, or an appeal. Surely it is the most elementary rule of politeness that one should make no apology which it is difficult to answer.

Of course it does happen occasionally that one person feels disappointed at want of attention from another. But it happens so much more often that we overrate the importance of our attentions, that on this account alone we would recommend each of our friends to take it for granted that his absence has been unnoticed in the crowd. It is curiously difficult to take this for granted. It is



more difficult, we believe, for any one really and practically to bring home to his imagination that he is an object of entire indifference, than that he is disliked. This last, indeed, is not a matter of great difficulty. We are all, at times, distasteful to ourselves. We can readily imagine, even before we are forced to believe, that the sentiment may be shared by others. But that we should actually not be taken cognisance of, one way or another, that it should be all one whether we are there or not there, this is a state of mind nobody has any help in imagining from the most diligent self-examination. He must, to understand it, make that most difficult effort of suppressing all sense of self, and putting himself in the place of another. Nobody can really believe that he is the average man. He may think himself exceptionally faulty, perhaps—we are speaking of a state of mind quite possible to the humblest of men—still he cannot realise that the chief thing about him to other people is that he is just a specimen of humanity. It is strange, for this is what we must all be, to the bulk of our acquaintance. However, the difficulty of conceiving this of oneself is almost insuperable. Each of us knows so much in himself that is unlike other people, that he cannot conceive how these things are not present to the mind of any one who reflects upon him for a moment. He forgets that the most common-place person of his acquaintance might say the same. It is our own belief that a common-place person is a merely relative term, like a first cousin once removed. At a certain distance people are common-place, and the distance varies. A considerable force of character impresses itself on the attention a long way off. But most people must seem common-place outside the range of intimacy, and the capacity for intimacy is limited.

These considerations, indisputable as they are, being so difficult to realise, we would bring forward another, not more obvious, for that is impossible, but more easy of practical application. Supposing you are one of the small number of people who can say, 'I am sorry I have not been able to come and see you,' without rousing to

the lips of your friend the suppressed reply, 'I really have not missed you,'—still, it must be remembered that neglect is not one of the offences that an apology wipes out. We are not, of course, taking into account the cases where there is any explanation to be offered. We do not call the information that our friend has been laid up with a sprained ankle an apology. We are speaking of *bonâ fide* apologies,—real confessions of failure, as far as they go, in what is assumed to be the duties of friendship; and while we allow that a great many failures are more than compensated for by being confessed, we urge that neglect is commonly enhanced thereby. 'I am sorry you are so little brilliant or interesting, that I can always find something better to do than to come and see you,' is a statement you cannot make pleasing by the cleverest paraphrase. Yet people are always thinking this may be done by simply suppressing the most obvious part of their case. They hope their friend will jump at once from the fact to their sorrow for it, and will feel gratified by the association. But he can only make the transit by the ordinary stepping-stones; the least logical of human beings must feel, with Polonius,—

'But this effect, defective, comes by cause,'

and so finds himself contemplating his own stupidity or vulgarity, or even his simple insignificance. A pleasing object you have pointed out to him, in your anxiety to be civil!

We are unable to suggest a good recipe for rendering neglect palatable. 'Least said, soonest mended,' is the only scrap of wisdom we have to offer on the subject. We have, indeed, heard of an apology made to a lady for omitted attentions on the score that the apologist had been unaware of her good position in society, which apology so delighted her that she rather encouraged the acquaintance in consequence. But her gratification was of a kind which probably the most benevolent of us are not eager to afford our friends, and we cannot recall another instance of this kind of excuse proving satisfactory. We do not even counsel much explanation of



a more adequate and dignified character if it is to apply to the future as well as the past. As people get busier, or feebler, or more sought after, they are obliged, more or less, to 'weed' their acquaintance, as the saying is, and they may often feel, in doing this, that, from a different point of view, the possible friend would be anything but a weed. We are informed that it is a gross sign of bad gardening to allow a daisy to show its modest face on a lawn, but the owner of a trim villa may admire Wordsworth's verses on the flower all the same; and something like this may be the feeling of many persons, when they decide that some old acquaintance must be no more encouraged, or some new one repelled. We have never seen any attempt at explanation in the case, however, that did not strike us as a mistake. The most careful enumeration of one's many claims only drives home to the mind of the unsuccessful claimant the consciousness that he is not sufficiently important to be admitted to the lists. That is the last thing in the mind of the speaker, but by the law of mental parallax, which it is so difficult to allow for, it must be the first in the mind of the hearer. We have known persons whose minutes were valuable spend many of them, where two civil lines were all that was needed, in making an answer to a note ungracious, stilted, and tiresome. No doubt their view was that all this explanation softened the refusal of the invitation to dinner, or whatever it was, but the truth is that simplicity in these matters is as much more gracious as happily—though the fact is by no means universally acted upon—it is also more convenient.

Another form of apology with which we would wage war is any in which the apologiser assures his friend he had no intention of giving offence. Has he ever such an intention? The excuse had some meaning in former days; it was allowable to tell a man the speaker had no intention of offending him when the offence was the first step towards shooting him, and as a synonym for not wishing that result, we should permit it still. But it wants pistols and seconds in the background to give it

any meaning whatever. Men only mean to offend each other when they would, in former days, have been ready to kill each other. They are offensive from inconsiderateness, from selfishness, from stupidity, from want of imagination, not once in a thousand times from intending to be so. What people often mean, however, by saying that they meant no offence was that they meant well. It is a very different thing to mean not to be offensive, and not to mean to be offensive, and we would by no means suppress the statement of the first, but we would never allow any one to think that the mere absence of an intention to give pain or annoyance ought to be mentioned as bearing on the fact that the thing has been done. The question is whether this uneasy feeling is reasonable; that there was no intention to produce it proves nothing, one way or another, and may almost always be taken for granted.

We have preached a curious sermon on the duty of making apologies, we may be told, consisting almost entirely of an attack, made with all the force at our disposal, on the apologetic habit of mind, or perhaps we should rather say, the apologetic habit of words. But this is eminently a case for homœopathic treatment. We oppose the habit of making apologies, because we want an apology to have some meaning. It should be like a wedding present, something the giver does not look to repeat in a life-time. When it has become a habit, it must always sink into that most unsatisfactory substitute for the real article, a mere statement of the offence,—a repetition in words of the thing that has annoyed us in fact. We have seen it urged upon indiscreetly charitable persons (and it has struck us as one of the most practicable of reforms), that they should never allow themselves to give trifling sums. No doubt they had better give a trifling sum than a large one to an undeserving petitioner, but they are so much more likely to think twice if the gift is a sovereign than if it is a halfpenny, that even the danger of enriching an impostor is a less evil than the stimulus to caution is a gain. This is the reform we would make in Apologies. We want to get rid of all



these halfpennyworths that are bestowed so readily, and let the giver dispose of what costs him something. We want to stop this dribbling-away of meaningless excuse where there is nothing to excuse, and store up the wasted material for some of those occasions, not wholly wanting to the life of the gentlest and most courteous, when the grace of intercourse has been hurt by temper, or indiscretion, or indolence, and a word in season would right it, and perhaps make it better than before.

## HENRY THOMAS BUCKLE

THIS volume is the record of a journey in the East, and the conversations and reflections to which it gave occasion. It seems to have been modelled on Miss Martineau's book of Eastern travel, but as the writer is entirely without that power of bringing the scenes described before the eye of the reader which raises that work, whatever we may think of the views set forth in it, to the first rank among pictures of travel, the similarity of aim makes the difference of result unfortunately obvious. And as we must also add that the mental prospects herein opened, though not entirely wanting in originality, seem to us not original enough for the pretension with which they are announced, we may seem to have selected for notice a volume hardly worth the reader's attention. And in fact we should hardly think it worth criticising, if sketches of Eastern travel and theories of philosophy formed its sole interest, but it adds to these, as the title wisely informs us, a portrait valuable both from subject and treatment, and to this part of the book we confine the remarks which follow.

Eighteen years have now elapsed since a work appeared which made a sensation on its first issue which its author might have described in the words of Gibbon, who tells us that his first two volumes were in the winter of their appearance 'on every table, and almost every toilet.' To attain the sudden brilliancy of the meteor and retain the permanent illumination of the planet is a fate shared by few efforts of human labour with the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It is not too soon to say that Buckle's *History of Civilisation* does not belong to that small band. We greatly doubt how it would bear that test of per-



manent value, a second perusal; we strongly suspect that many among the readers once fascinated by its brilliancy would without any change in their own point of view, now turn with impatience from its shallowness. Still, it was a valuable and noteworthy book. We are a little unjust in requiring permanence as an element of literary value; a book may be at once ephemeral and useful. Bacon's saying, 'Truth emerges sooner from error than from confusion,' often as it is quoted, is not enough laid to heart. Truth, perhaps, owes as much to those who stir and quicken thought as to those who enlarge its stores. Let the reader remember some of the *vivâ voce* discussions the brilliant fragment provoked, let him unite in imagination the critics whom no accident could bring together now in this world. Can he, as he reviews the varied group, recall any other volume, not fictitious, which was a subject of common interest to minds so numerous and so diverse? The distinction is not a small one. It may belong to a work in one sense merely ephemeral, the next generation may find its brilliancy tarnished, its learning questionable, its theories futile. But the work done is not ephemeral, seeds of thought have been dropped into thousands of minds, and one or two contain soil where they will germinate. To stimulate thought in many minds is a work well worth achieving, whatever comes of it, or whether anything comes of it that our instruments can measure. And this is the very least that can be said of Buckle's *History of Civilisation*.

One of the many interesting suggestions which Mr. Stuart-Glennie's account of its author gives us, we choose to follow out here. The first exhibits in the idiosyncrasy of an individual the danger of a class. We shall, perhaps, be suspected, very unjustly, of trying to say something startling, when we add that in the almost grotesque vanity of which this volume presents us with some amusing instances, Mr. Buckle affords us a typical example of the dangers of the intellectual life. The truth is, that the dangers of no life are so little understood. We can call to mind only one thinker who has adequately recognised those difficulties, but he is one who must well have known all the

advantages and all the disadvantages that belong to the domain of the intellect. 'The great danger of the present day,' says Comte (we may, in quoting from memory, somewhat exaggerate an exaggeration), 'is the dream of a reign of Mind.' It is a mere dream, he means, because intellect belongs to an essentially weak part of our nature. The needs of the physical life are imperious, the impulses of the heart are not less mighty, and between these giants a feeble dwarf has to hold his own. Woe to him if he does not hold his own! He needs all his armour for the battle, and a part of his armour, perhaps, is this very vanity which people are apt to be so hard upon. How could men repel allurements so mighty on the right hand and on the left, if they discerned the exact limits of the tiny field which, as the reward of all their steadfastness, they were to reclaim from the vast wilderness? Not that any one who does discern this as an accomplished work doubts whether it was worth while to scorn delights and live laborious days to turn the smallest plot of land from desert to pasture, but the conviction needed to stimulate arduous exertion in the face of persistent and multiform distraction, needs a margin of strength beyond that which is sufficient to decide on the result in the quiet of untroubled contemplation. Strength, it may be said, can never spring from error. But is not the opinion, 'my work is of great importance,' nearer the truth, '*all* work is of great importance,' than an estimate of an individual achievement more proportionately accurate would be, without a much higher sense of the value in all true work than is generally accessible? It is not graceful in a writer to state that he has escaped persecution for unpopular opinions owing to his 'intellectual splendour,' but if every farthing rushlight which its owner supposes to light up a large space were extinguished, there would certainly be a great diminution of intellectual splendour, and very likely it would be extinguished but for that mistake. Observe, we are speaking of the intellectual life strictly so called, not of all the life to which fine intellect is indispensable. The general or the statesman whom mature life finds vain, shows a want of sense. He has been



measuring himself against others all his life, and has failed to take his own measure. The literary life affords no such opportunity of self-estimate as the world of affairs, and it is not, therefore, an equal reproach to the understanding of the man of letters that he does not make it.

We may be told, perhaps, that the life of the man on whose behalf we have drawn these pleadings is a practical refutation of the argument; no career ever knew less of that struggle with difficulty and depression which is an abundant excuse for vanity. His last conversation with his companion was a review of the extreme happiness of his life; and the reflections on that happiness, we may say, by the way, are to our thinking contained in the most interesting original passage of this book. True, Mr. Buckle reached literary fame with no more strain or difficulty than any one experiences in getting to Edinburgh by an express train, but then it was his intense belief in himself which helped him on, shutting him in with his work. Admit more of the external air of life, with its wafts of varied seduction, and such a life as he led becomes arduous and difficult. No doubt it also becomes much more valuable. Perhaps a University career, for instance, with all the miserable waste of time often entailed by it, might have been worth his while, in the wider views, the richer experience, the truer proportions, which his mind would have derived from such a discipline. But we doubt if he would with broader views have written, before the age of forty, a fragment which, with all its defects, has been a valuable gift to his generation. You lose in force what you gain in breadth, and it needs very great force to bear down the oppositions which obstruct the path of the intellect, for some arise from the evil part of our nature, and some from the very best.

Perhaps we have already overstepped the narrow space left us to point out what seems a point in the character portrayed in this volume even more important than its lesson of tolerance towards the class who study to widen and fertilise the realm of thought. Buckle's death is a landmark in the history of thought. He reconciled two

states of mind which we believe will never be reconciled again. He thought all that we sum up in the word 'Christianity' a mischievous delusion, but he borrowed one clause from the creed he condemned, and made it the expression of his heart's deepest yearning. He believed 'in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.' It has not been a very uncommon thing in the past to unite to the belief that man's sole business here is with the laws of the things that are visible and tangible, a dim trust that personality continues when all that we see and touch has lost its connection with that mysterious fact. But this combination is a mere incoherence. If man is to survive these external manifestations of his being, he is already the inhabitant of a world to which they do not belong. If he has now no foothold in a region of which the eye and touch, the balance and thermometer, and all the apparatus by which sense magnifies and corrects itself, give no indication, all analogy is against the supposition that he can become so by some magic transformation at the moment that we call death. We suppose no thinker would refuse this issue now. Some would say, 'Yes, and that shows the baselessness of this dream of a supernatural existence when the natural is ended.' Others would say, 'Yes, and that shows the futility of refusing to recognise a supernatural world we must one day enter.' Perhaps the need of accepting this alternative at starting has transferred some of the second set to the first. But the alternative itself would be accepted, we believe, by every logical mind. Any changes required in our statement would be changes of dialect, implying mere difference of opinion about the *words* 'supernatural' and 'natural.' That the things we mean by them cannot be so divided as to make the last the exclusive rule for an infinitesimal fraction of our being, and the first the exclusive rule for all the rest, would be conceded by all, and by most would be distinctly urged. And yet so near is the past when it was possible to believe this, that the same man, less than twenty years ago, wrote a book representing it as a mischievous delusion to believe, here and now, in any



world other than that of which the senses give evidence; and shortly afterwards an essay declaring that life would be intolerable to him, unless he were assured of a future in which the laws of the world to be ignored here were the only ones which could have much interest for us. Mr. Buckle is constantly sneered at, in the volume we are noticing, for believing that an endless love implies an endless object. It was indeed a flat defiance to every other principle he taught and firmly believed. He thought that we were to spend in the supernatural world a part of our existence to which that which we spent in the natural world bore an infinitesimal proportion, and yet that our wisdom lay in an exclusive occupation with this ephemeral sojourn. How was this incoherence possible to a mind which, without quite adopting his own self-estimate, we may still call above the average? The question indicates what now, perhaps, gives his life and work their chief interest.

The belief which now appears so incoherent may, if we allow ourselves the coarseness of statement almost necessary in very brief remarks upon such subjects, be called the characteristic belief of the eighteenth century. The men who recur to our mind as most typical of what Mr. Carlyle, we think, has called the 'age of half-ness,' had renounced the belief of earlier times that man had chiefly to do with an invisible world in this stage of his being, but they were not prepared to give up their hopes of an invisible home, when there was no question at all about keeping the visible one. The life of the Spirit was their *pis-aller*. They did not want to be troubled with mysticism and enthusiasm while they were safe on the terra firma of fleshly existence, but they were not prepared to take leave for ever of the well-loved dead, and watch their own evening fade into a night that promised no dim, far-off, mysterious dawn. This is a mere description of wishes. Why could they accommodate their wishes to beliefs which we see to be incompatible with them? The truth is their view was as different from ours as candlelight is from daylight. Those who brought such doctrines as Mr. Buckle's into the daylight of popular

apprehension must then have been prepared to be, to some extent, their martyrs. The consequence was that these doctrines were kept under a light that was as brilliant and artificial as that of a chandelier; Hume's satirical professions of admiration for Christianity, for instance, actually take in his biographer. Now, there are a great many things which sharp eyes might look at by a wax candle without seeing what would be evident to much duller ones by daylight. While Truth was an object of investigation to ingenious men and of exposition to the world of elegant letters, many of the plainest issues were hid from the eyes of the teacher as much as from those of the learner. It was possible for the philosopher to be, in some degree, his own dupe, to enter the coarse daylight world into which he never brought his philosophy, and share the hopes, the reverence, perhaps in some sense the beliefs, which he left for the ignorant vulgar. There is a story (which we do not believe) of Hume having answered some one who found him in great grief for his mother's death and taunted him with having uprooted the consolation for all such grief, to the effect that what he might argue as a philosopher by no means barred the path to such consolations as he shared with common-place men and women. If the story is not very probable, the remark which may have been its origin seems to us likely enough. The fact that he persuaded a disciple to enter the Church has at all events the same import. We do not think a man of very fine honour could have done that in his day. But only a hypocrite could do it in ours.

For by a change, which we will not pretend not to think an immense gain, though in weak moments we may be tempted to regret the contemptuous tolerance of the last century's philosophy, the philosopher is now converted into the missionary. He does not shroud his speculations in witty innuendo; his utterances are a sermon, not a satire. 'To the poor the Gospel is preached.' What we think of that Gospel it is needless to inform any reader of these columns, and those who would differ from us most widely as to the value of a particular



doctrine, would be at one with us in the belief that earnestness to diffuse doctrine is no test of truth. But if missionary zeal afford no guarantee against error, it proves, in the long run, an infallible solvent of inconsistency. Men cannot go on preaching, as the Gospel by which mankind are to be healed of their ills, an exclusive attention to the laws of the things that we see and touch, and yet believe that our sojourn among the things that we see and touch is, compared to our whole existence, a mere moment. They may hint that all speculations beyond these laws are delusion, and yet keep in some dim corner of their being an inconsistent hope or something that they may never have looked at closely enough to know whether it be hope or fear. But these vague emotional possibilities are like the images preserved in tombs, which greet the first discoverer with a momentary distinctness that the first breath of the outer air obliterates, as it crumbles to dust the form that only its exclusion could preserve. All in our day are forced to see clearly that the supernatural is either a dream in the future or a reality in the present.

And here for the second time we may seem refuted by the very character which has formed the occasion of our remarks. Mr. Buckle preached vehemently that the Supernatural was an illusion in the present, and yet avowed that unless it was a reality in the future he could not 'stand up and live.' He, at all events, did not hint at his belief,—he preached it with missionary fervour, and yet loaded it with the inconsistent supplement which rendered it to a logical eye an absurdity. True, but then he was a son of the eighteenth century born out of due time. The relics of a dead faith must indeed crumble to dust before the breath of day, but there is an interval in which they seem distinct and permanent, and a short life may be contained in that interval. And though there was a good deal about Mr. Buckle that was remarkable, we incline to think that the most remarkable fact in his history was his affording an example of such a life.

We must confess to a feeling of half-regret in turning back to that last gleam of eighteenth-century compromise.

There is always a great temptation to regret a time of compromise,—it is like a time of truce in civil war. As we look back across the interval that separates us from the appearance of the *History of Civilisation in England*, we seem to return to the early course of a river, to join hands once more across the slender brook with those whose voices are now almost inaudible across the wide stream. It is not only, it is not chiefly, that the graves give up their dead; a wider chasm than that which separates those who are gone from those who hope to rejoin them divides these last from those who do not share that hope. Eighteen years ago that divergence could be forgotten. Those who know how much repose—how much of all we covet most—lies in that oblivion, will not wonder at the expression of regret accompanying that of clear discernment that it is passed, never to return. Nevertheless, the regret is unwise. Only those who distrust the power of truth can dread sharpened issues. The first step towards truth is consistency, even if it be in the direction of error. To disentangle belief from all that is adventitious is an indispensable prelude to the testing of belief. The sooner a faith is made coherent, the sooner it reaches those tests of truth which all must look for who believe, as we do, that truth is the healing power for all the ills of humanity.



## THE UNFAITHFUL STEWARD

‘MAN meint die Bibel zu verstehen,’ says Strauss, ‘weil man gewohnt ist, sie nicht zu verstehen.’ A pregnant saying, which the student of Scripture has reason to recall at every page. The Christian leaves his attention at the threshold of his church as the Mussulman does his shoes. He does not really believe that anything which he will hear within its walls is meant for intelligent attention. A small part of what is read there has, he vaguely believes, a mystic import of priceless value; the rest is unconsciously regarded as a curious old setting, from which these jewels could not be removed without damage, but which in itself is valueless. He is accustomed to a kind of reverent boredom as the right effect to be produced by the perusal of a chapter of the Old or New Testament, and he mistakes the sense of familiarity in that experience for intelligent apprehension. Devout persons, when they open the Bible, seek for something consolatory or elevating; while others, who think its perusal a duty, are in a great hurry to have done with it, and get to something interesting; and the one state of mind is not more hostile than the other to any true apprehension of the history of Israel. A tourist in the Lakes, entering into conversation with a postman of the district, and mentioning to him a journey to Palestine, was answered by the exclamation: ‘Do you really mean to tell me, sir, that there is such a place as Jerusalem in this world?’ This question caricatures but does not distort the feeling of average orthodoxy towards the whole history that centres in Jerusalem. Those who know that the Holy City has a terrestrial latitude and longitude, and are aware that history gives it a place as well as geography, still shrink from the attempt to bring

attention to a focus on any special point of that history, and regard the attempt to find definite meaning in every passage with a feeling not unlike this country postman's surprise at learning that Jerusalem might be found on the map.

This acquiescence in a void of meaning is continued where it is most contrary to all that we should expect. 'Do you mean to tell me,' many a Christian might ask, if he expressed himself as distinctly as the countryman just mentioned, 'that our Lord spoke sense?' Lessons which all would feel unworthy of the least revered of human teachers are accepted, without question, when they are assumed to come from the Divine teacher. A parable included by the Church of England among her Sunday extracts from the Gospel, as well as her daily Lessons, is, as it is generally understood, a cumbrous and far-fetched machinery for conveying injunctions which one would suppose it both unnecessary and undesirable to put into words at all; injunctions which, if we met them where we could form an unbiassed opinion of them, we should feel it a compliment to call immoral, because we should rather consider them as utterly unmeaning. And we have only to turn back a page or two in the Gospel which records it to find Jesus warn His disciples explicitly against the very habit of mind which here He is supposed to be inculcating.<sup>1</sup> The hospitality of His disciples was to be regulated on principles exactly contrary to those which inspired the precautions of the steward. They were to seek their friends among those who had not wherewith to recompense them, he had chosen his among those who could return his favours with interest. This is much the smallest part of the difficulty, for with the steward it is a question of his master's resources and not his own. His dishonesty is explained away, as merely a little invention thrown in to make the story more interesting, but the difficulty still left on our hands would be quite insuperable in the light of such attention as we give to secular matters. As it is supposed to be a question of religion we are content to accept an apologue in which

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 13, 14.



we have first to explain away the point, and then forget a recently uttered precept exactly contradicting its purport even in this blunted form. The dishonesty, which we are bid to treat as irrelevant detail, would appear the central point in the intention of the teacher; the self-seeking, which we are taught to accept as a part of the ideal here enjoined, is unquestionably elsewhere the object of his most urgent warnings. The only duty which the interpreters profess to disentangle from his embroglio is that of almsgiving<sup>1</sup>—almsgiving with other people's money, and with a view to one's own future advancement! This kind of charity no doubt is very common in practice, but, if any human teacher seemed to preach it, we should either despise him, or suspect that we must have misunderstood him. The beneficence thus recommended would be on a par with the philosophy of which Cicero boasts to Atticus,<sup>2</sup> after telling him that some houses in his possession are in such a state that he will have to rebuild them, a misfortune which he describes himself as meeting in a beautiful spirit of Socratic magnanimity, and then concludes: 'But I hope to make a good thing of it, after all.' In the ordinary interpretation of this parable we have this curious glimpse of a philosopher's endeavour to make the best of both worlds set before us as a Divine model of wisdom. Nobody is quite satisfied with the result; the devout commentator slurs over the passage with reverent embarrassment; and one of the most intelligent of the class has the candour to confess that most people look for a little more meaning in the words of the Lord than they will find there. But it does not seem to him irreverent to urge that we expect too much from the teaching of our Master,<sup>3</sup> and must be content to learn from Him what we certainly should not teach to

<sup>1</sup> This extraordinary interpretation is incorporated with the text in our Bibles, as any one may see by referring to the marginal annotations. It was the view both of Luther and Calvin, and many more. See Trench on the *Parables*, p. 445.

<sup>2</sup> *Ad. Att.* xiv.

<sup>3</sup> 'I cannot doubt,' says Archbishop Trench (*Parables*, p. 427), 'that many interpreters have, so to speak, overrun their game, and that we have here a parable of Christian prudence, Christ exhorting us to use the world in a manner against itself.'

the humblest scholar who would be content to learn of us.

If we were studying this passage in any secular writer we should, in the first place, look for the index to its meaning in its most important sentence; and in the second place, note its connection with any important contemporary event. There is no doubt what the most important sentence in the whole passage is, surely. 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass,' said Jesus, after concluding the parable, addressing the Pharisees who had found something absurd in it, 'than for one tittle of the law to fail'; and the protest against adultery, so oddly inconsequent in the ordinary interpretations, shows what part of the law was in His mind. It would be impossible, if we gave the subject the attention we bring to any other history, to ignore the reference here. The most conspicuous person in the country had done the very thing here condemned. Herod Antipas, the creature of Rome and the ruler of Galilee, had not only put away his own wife and married his brother's wife, but had punished with death a protest against this act of double adultery; and religious Jews had condoned the offence and entered into relations with the offender, which no faithful 'steward of the mysteries of the Lord' could have held for a moment. In pursuance of the plot<sup>1</sup> devised with the party of Antipas they had endeavoured to force Jesus to echo the protest, in order that they might involve Him in the fate of the Baptist. The first part of the endeavour, we know, was successful; the condemnation of divorce is the most distinct decision, bearing on human actions, which remains to us of the reported words of Jesus. For the most part He avoided such decision. When invited to settle a dispute as to a legacy, a dispute in which, as it appears, His arbitration would have been accepted by both parties, He pointedly refuses the position which Moses had claimed,

<sup>1</sup> The second Evangelist gives us the formation of the plot (Mark iii. 6); the first and second describe its issue (Matt. xix. 3 and xxii. 15, 16, Mark x. 2); while a passage in the third (Luke xiii. 31) evidently presupposes it. So that there is more evidence for this alliance between the religious and the Court party in the Gospels, than for any other non-miraculous event which is not mentioned elsewhere.



and repeats the very words<sup>1</sup> of a rebel against His authority. He refuses a verdict on a special case, and gives instead a warning against the universal temptation which lay at its root. But not so when the Pharisees came to ask Him about divorce. He does not stop here at the exhortation: 'Take heed and beware of lust.' He now accepts the position, which before He had repudiated; He commits Himself to a declaration in matters definite, external and legal, to a statement of the marriage law which struck even His disciples as extreme, and which Antipas might have answered with the axe if he had treated Jesus as he had treated the forerunner of Jesus. It does not appear that the condemnation of divorce, which had proved fatal to the Baptist, did, after all, imperil the life of the Saviour.<sup>2</sup> But there can be no doubt that it had been intended to do so by the Pharisees, and that the warning, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife . . . and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery,' was a condemnation passed on the husband of Herodias and the murderer of John.

We, looking on that condemnation with English and Christian eyes, perhaps hardly take in its scope. It does not appear to us an instance of any particular feeling about the Jewish law, one way or another. It seems a question of universal morality. Strange tribute to that morality which it ignores!<sup>3</sup> Israel alone, among the nations of antiquity, upholds the purity of marriage. The Roman hero, whose name was a symbol of virtue,<sup>4</sup> lends his wife to a friend; the Roman writer whom some

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 14. Compare Exod. ii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Unless we are to take the warning of the Pharisees, above cited (Luke xiii. 31), as sincere. But possibly it was so.

<sup>3</sup> The protest of the last of the Prophets (Mal. ii. 14-16) shows the place that conjugal infidelity took in the morality of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Cato lent his wife, Marcia, to Hortensius, and took her back after the death of the latter. His appearance in the verse of Dante (*Purg.* i. 32) gives the modern reader an estimate of his fame as a stern moralist:—

'Vidi presso di me un veglio solo  
Degno di tanta reverenza in vista  
Che più non dee a padre alcun figliudo.'

Compare this with the fate of Francesca di Rimini.

moderns have revered as a saint,<sup>1</sup> repudiates the faithful wife of thirty years, in order to marry an heiress. The morality which was good enough for Cato and Cicero was good enough for many an ordinary Jew, and the letter of the law seemed to permit of this laxer interpretation. But deep in every true Jewish heart must have vibrated the comment of the Teacher, 'From the beginning it was not so.' The nation which used the same expression for the infidelity of a wife to a husband, and of the nation to its unseen Lord, had set a seal on the marriage bond that no concession could efface, and such concessions as the disciples could cite belonged to the Law, it must have been felt, in a totally different sense from all its most characteristic precepts. The faith of man to woman was bound up with the faith of man to God, and history chronicles, with equal accents, the terrible sanctions of both. David's adultery becomes debauchery in his son, and a divided kingdom chronicles the impotence of a family that has lost its strength with its unity. The Edomite upstarts, who had succeeded to the throne of David and to his worst vices, might indeed disregard that law; the father of Antipas might have almost as many wives as Solomon,<sup>2</sup> and betake himself to divorce as readily as Cicero or Cato; but the Jew who escaped the fate of the Baptist by changing his protest to apology, had lost sight of the stewardship of Israel.

The temptation indeed was great, hopes and fears alike prompted a lenient construction of lawlessness in the nominee of Rome—hopes and fears perhaps not altogether base. We may remember that the service which the Pharisee would be called on to render to Antipas after the execution of John<sup>3</sup> was one which

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus thus speaks of Cicero.

<sup>2</sup> History knows of ten. His first wife was divorced that he might marry Mariamne, and the sequel to that marriage was an eloquent tribute to the Jewish law of purity.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus makes no allusion to this, and the condemnation He passes on the divorce may be so read as to imply condonation of the greater crime; but it is evident that the divorce was made a test question by the Pharisees. Nobody asked any question about the murder of John. The exclamation of Antipas on hearing of Jesus, 'It is John whom I beheaded,' shows how often his



Papinian died rather than perform for Caracalla,<sup>1</sup> but we must not forget that it was one which Seneca was perfectly ready to perform for Nero. To soothe a guilty conscience is an attempt that may take very different aspects, and doubtless Seneca felt, when he composed the apology by which Nero was to justify his matricide to the Senate, as if he were thinking of something nobler than saving his own skin. Shakespeare has taught us how a hideous crime may fade into a background that leaves the possibility of sympathy for the criminal. Read once more the pleading of Macbeth:—

‘Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?’

No passage from the pen of Shakespeare is more full of genius. What Macbeth recalls is a hideous crime—treachery, ingratitude, disloyalty culminating in murder; what he suggests is a pathetic disaster, a bereavement, a misunderstanding, a loss of something precious torn from his reluctant grasp. This is the uttermost triumph of the poet, one in which he overcomes the preacher on his own ground. Each of us knows, for himself, in some slighter degree, that wonderful change of aspect. A Shakespeare magnifies it to its highest point, and shows it us for the whole world.

It is the same thing to say that this is what each one can see for himself, and that it is what he can see for another if it be his interest to see it. We, setting the proud assertion of Papinian, ‘It is easier to commit than to justify a fratricide,’ beside the prostituted rhetoric of Seneca, see only that a philosopher can be a selfish coward. But nothing is easier than to confuse self and the world, and doubtless he who strove, however feebly,

courtiers must have had to soothe his remorse and find excuses for his crime.

<sup>1</sup> See Gibbon, ch. vi.

to check the madness of a pupil on the throne of the world, felt as if it were the world he were considering and not himself. And what he felt at the Court of the Emperor many a Pharisee must have felt just as strongly at the Court of the Tetrarch. Antipas was but the out-rider of Titus, and among his courtiers there were doubtless many earnest Jews, filled with deep reverence for the traditions of their race, half submerged as these seemed beneath the rising tide of Roman dominion, and struggling to justify to themselves the compromise which bought the indispensable support of Rome. 'It is a brutal, irreligious, insolent tyranny,' we may imagine them pleading, 'but what are we to do? John, like another Elijah, defied the revengeful Jezebel beside this Roman nominee, and what came of it? His death has done no good to his cause. We have lost him and gained nothing. Let us not imitate his unmeasured, impolitic denunciations. Let us take a milder view of this lawless Gentile world, which seems to be getting the upper hand. Our home, our place, is imperilled; it may be that we shall have to seek a refuge at Rome, at Alexandria, at Antioch—among the cities where Abraham is not a sacred name, and where the laws of Moses are unknown. Let us prepare ourselves for such a misfortune by a rational view of our law, and its relation to those who, in one sense, must be confessed to have broken it. We must confront the possibility that the Romans may take away our name and our nation; let us consider, then, how we may adapt Jerusalem to Rome.'

Already, indeed, had the Jew made himself a home in those 'everlasting habitations,' the reference to which we so strangely miss in the parable. If every word of Jewish literature had perished, we might learn from that which is familiar to scholars to track his steps in the motley crowd which thronged the eternal city. The first Emperor manifests at once his familiarity with and ignorance of the faith of Israel, by describing his daily fare on one occasion as smaller than that of a Jew on the Sabbath,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suet., *Vita Octav.*, 76. The passage occurs in a letter from Augustus to Tiberius. Ernesti wants to make the Sabbath mean the week, as in Luke xviii. 12.



little knowing what trouble he was preparing for learned commentators, who will not allow him to make such a blunder as to suppose that the Sabbath was a fast. A poet he banished assures his readers, with about as much knowledge of what he was talking of, probably, that the Sabbath is not a bad day to make love on.<sup>1</sup> 'You wanted a word with me,' says a character in one of Horace's comedies (if we may bestow on his satires the title most descriptive to a modern ear), pouncing on an acquaintance, in order to shake off a bore. 'Not to-day,' answers his malicious friend, pulling a long face. 'It is the Jewish Sabbath; we must not discuss business till to-morrow.'<sup>2</sup> 'There are plenty of us, you'll have to give in, as if we were Jews,'<sup>3</sup> says Horace elsewhere, speaking as one of the numerous crowd of poets, and testifying that the band of propagandists, if they were absurd, were also dangerous. The great orator of Rome gives more emphatic testimony to this fact. His eloquence was at the service of another Verres, when the oppressed were Jews, but the advocate could profess himself terrorised by their presence among his audience, and sink his voice with dramatic effectiveness, lest all those dangerous fellows should answer his pleading with arguments more forcible than words.<sup>4</sup> The philosophic student of religion, the statesman who turned, in his hour of earthly despair, to hopes of a city of God, has not left us a single word to show that he was interested in the faith of Judæa—his only recorded mention of Judaism, besides the passages just cited, is a stupid joke to testify his acquaintance with the Jewish objection to pork<sup>5</sup>—but he bears his tribute to the power of a people

<sup>1</sup> Ovid, *Rem. Am.*, 219; cf. *Ars Amat.*, i. 76, 416.

<sup>2</sup> Serm. I. ix. 69. Note that the friend who is masquerading as a Jew professes himself to be 'unus multorum.'

<sup>3</sup> ' . . . Ac veluti te

Judæi, cogemus in hanc discedere turbam.'—Serm. I. iv. 142.

<sup>4</sup> *Pro Flacco*, 28. Cf. *De Provinciis Consularibus*, 5. The first passage is a very important one, being the earliest testimony to the influence of the Jews at Rome which has reached us. I have given every relevant allusion in paraphrase below.

<sup>5</sup> This *bon mot* rests only on the authority of Plutarch (*Life of Cicero*, 7). If authentic, it is important, as it would prove that already (B.C. 70) the Jewish propaganda had reached the Senate.

whose bond was in that faith, and who had no other power. The Jew at Rome, as at Jerusalem, compassed sea and land to make one proselyte; and the alarm of disgust he inspired is suggested by every mention we have cited, and had been manifested, when Jesus made this last journey to Jerusalem, by the decree of the Senate some dozen years previously which banished the whole Jewish population from Italy.<sup>1</sup> For a modern reader, the record is even more important than the fact. The historian who chronicles the order of the Senate, in mentioning that four thousand Jewish freedmen were on this occasion ordered to serve against the brigands of Sardinia, adds his opinion, or that of the Roman people—and probably both—that if all these four thousand perished in the expedition, it would be a very good riddance.<sup>2</sup>

When Tacitus wrote, the Jew at Rome was no longer a figure in genteel society; gentlemen of breeding did not amuse themselves by aping his religious observances; Emperors did not trouble themselves to quote them. The days when indignant Jews could make their oppressor even pretend to fear them were long past. We greet the Hebrew at the gate of Rome (he is no longer allowed to enter) almost as we are to know him on the page of the modern romancer and dramatist, a trembling, despised alien, strangely hated though so utterly despised. His figure on the canvas of the Hogarth of Rome (as Juvenal has well been called<sup>3</sup>) does not differ greatly from that which is to be familiar to us almost to our own day. The 'basket and hay,'<sup>4</sup> which seems his sole furniture, reminds us of Carlyle's sneer at Hebrew 'old clothes'; the august associations of the grove where the poet finds the trembling squatters are revived in order to bring out its present degradation. In this grove Numa met Egeria; here now

<sup>1</sup> Or from Rome, according to Josephus (*Ant.* XVIII. iii. 4-5).

<sup>2</sup> 'Si interissent, vile damnum' (*Tac. Ann.* ii. 85). We learn from the Jewish historian that many of the Jews had a swifter fate: they chose death rather than a military service which entailed an oath forbidden by their sacred law.

<sup>3</sup> By Mr. J. D. Lewis in the excellent commentary appended to his edition of 1873.

<sup>4</sup> Juvenal, *Sat.* iii. 14, 'Quorum cophinus fœnumque supellex'; vi. 542, 'Cophino fœnoque relicto.' Evidently the Jew had no other bed.



these dirty, squalid foreigners are allowed to find an open-air lodging, and hence some mumbling crone, strange successor<sup>1</sup> of the Divine nymph, creeps secretly into Rome to infect Roman ladies with her despicable superstition, and bring her lofty pretensions as an interpreter of the laws of Solyma into ridiculous contrast with her urgent need of a few pence. Yet let the Roman be on his guard against the seemingly despicable foes, Juvenal seems to urge, bringing to the faith he scorns a weighty tribute unknown to himself, 'in their wretched dens they still look down on our noble law, clutching their own with fanatical reverence; and the Roman, whose laziness in consecrating every seventh day to sloth is veneered with their superstition, may find his son joining that superstition to their vague pantheism, and at the same time to other superstitions even more ridiculous and more hateful.'<sup>2</sup>

That picture of the Jew, in his wretched hut outside the gates of Rome, lights up with forcible illustration the satirical recommendation of Jesus to cultivate the friendship of the world's conquerors. The Jew who tried to issue, on their behalf, a softened and expurgated edition of his law, was ejected from their everlasting habitations with scorn that a murderous war intensified into hatred. That sentence of exile prefigures the long agony of Israel. Shylock lurks in the crowd that Cicero dreads and despises, the inarticulate murmur that comes to us across nineteen centuries from the Aurelian steps<sup>3</sup> brings us the same intolerable pathos as the voiceless endurance, not less real, we may be sure, which Shakespeare shows us on the Rialto. Let us listen to the eloquence of Cicero with the indignant ears of some of those Jews from fear of whom he professed to lower his voice and avert his head, but who, doubtless, managed to hear every word of his oration. 'He said'—we may imagine one of them writing

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* vi. 512. This bringing of the poor old starving Jewess into the proximity of the divine Egeria is a peculiarly Juvenalian touch. The above is an ideal paraphrase of all Juvenal's allusions to the Jews, who seem, says a learned editor—Ludwig Friedlaender—to have possessed a special interest for him.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, xiv. 96-106. Mr. Lewis thinks that the Jews are here confounded with the Christians.

<sup>3</sup> Middleton thinks that these steps were a sort of exchange, where the Jews already carried on their trade of bankers.

from Rome to his kindred at Jerusalem in B.C. 60—‘he said that the scoundrel he defended had shown praiseworthy severity, forsooth, in confiscating the contributions our brethren in Asia were sending to the Temple! It was a sufficient crime in a son of Israel to have possessed wealth, and to have destined it to the Temple of the Lord. It had been a needless expense to invent a slander: he who could not prove a single Jew to be a false witness, or a bad citizen, gained his verdict in alluding to the undoubted fact that many Jews were religious, devoted, consistent, and brave. For he could add to the list of our merits the terrible indictment of our calamities. The Gods, he said, had shown what they thought of our claims in giving us over to the rule of his pitiless countrymen. The conqueror, who had penetrated to our Holy of Holies, showed a superfluous nicety of conscience, he hinted, in leaving untouched the gold and gems in its neighbourhood. Our loyalty to Sion, and to the unseen Father who has appointed there the shrine of His worship—our fidelity to His law through the inscrutable decree that opens our holy city to the Gentile foe—these are the crimes which render it, in Roman eyes, a merit to give up our wealth to pillage, and pour insult on the defenceless victims whom they approach only to plunder.’<sup>1</sup>

We draw on imagination in supposing that ninety years before the parable of the unjust steward was spoken, such words as these were written by a Jew at Rome to a Jew at Jerusalem. But if we say that the emotions which they express were felt and justified, we are writing history. It is probable enough that some aged fellow-guest with Jesus at the Pharisee’s dinner could remember hearing in his childhood how a righteous vengeance had overtaken the great rhetorician who had defended a plunderer of the Temple of the Lord; it is certain that Jesus was addressing Jews to whom the experience of their brethren at Rome was already tinged with those associations which were to haunt the whole long record of Jewish intercourse with men of European race. We see the trembling yet opulent

<sup>1</sup> *Pro Flacco*, c. 28, ‘Quam cara diis immortalibus esset, docuit, quod est victa.’



Israelite already forced to 'make himself friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness'; we know what kind of friends they were to prove. We know, and can we doubt that Jesus knew, or what that knowledge was to Him? He, who was not less the son of Israel because He was the son of Man, seems in the parable we misread so perversely to have as much excused as satirised the unfaithfulness of the steward whose name was to become, for so many centuries, a symbol for the unrighteous mammon. How deep the mournfulness of his sarcastic advice we can understand only when we read it in connection with his last farewell to the Jewish women who followed their Teacher to the place of death: 'Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' The judgment had already gone forth upon Israel, 'Thou mayest be no longer steward'; the delay which severed the death of Jesus from the fall of Zion was but as the interval between the lightning flash and the crash of doom, which, for mortal discernment, followed it; to the spirit dwelling in the realm of the Eternal that crash was already audible. Jesus knew what had to be endured by those to whom the Temple was still the dearest spot on earth. An awful foreboding seems to check Him as He reaches the crisis of the parable; He paints the temptation of the Jew in face of the Gentile; He sums up, in words that would strike us as prophetic, if we could really take in their import, the verdict that history has pronounced on a race which has supplied neither workers nor paupers; He excuses the leniency which, under this temptation, softens debt in hope of partaking advantage, and then He breaks off. He does not tell us how the debtors repaid the steward's service. It was not because that repayment was not already obvious to every true Jew. It was, doubtless, because He felt already what He expressed later, when He bade the women who pressed to the foot of the Cross weep for the fate of those who were to see the armies of Titus enter Jerusalem.

No tragedy of history equals the fate of Israel on European soil. The earliest exiles would have felt Babylon a paradise if they could have looked forward to the fate

of their descendants in the new Babylon and its successors. Yet it is the least intolerable part of that fate which stirs the world's sympathy. Antonio's insults, Front de Bœuf's gridiron, the San Benito of the Inquisition—all, to the true Israelite, would have been endurable, without that sentence which was heard through all, 'Thou mayest be no longer steward.' From the first moment that the Jew found himself in the Eternal City that dread sentence was heard, dimly and indistinctly, but with growing power. 'Thou hast cheapened the holy law and given the Gentile a receipt in full where thou shouldst have claimed a debt, and now thou shalt see that law thou hast taught him to despise and might have taught him to love a mark for deadly hatred, even before it becomes a signal for cruel persecution.' Poet, orator, historian; all were at one in contempt and hatred for the law that was the breath of life to the Jew. They had good reason to be so; it was known to them through the medium of an unreasoning fanaticism, chronicled in tumult, bloodshed, and stupid resistance to measures that had no aim but their welfare. As the law became the badge of unbending resistance to upstart despotism, it gathered to itself a passionate Hebrew devotion, in which the distinction of important and unimportant almost disappeared. In times of persecution nothing is unimportant which may be made a badge of loyalty. It is the boast of the Jewish historian<sup>1</sup> that the escape from a death of anguish could not tempt more than one or two Jews to deny the law familiar to them as the name of each one to himself, and, 'as it were, engraven on their own souls,' and his contrast of their utter devotion with the reluctant submission of other races to *their* laws was hardly more triumphant than just. That devotion to their law was wrought up with all in their nature that was highest and lowest. It kindled at the promise, 'In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blest'; it glows in the beacon-light of Isaiah; it had not quite died out to the gaze of some Jewish slave in a Roman household, whispering in the ear of a mistress the message that joins the weak and oppressed in a common hope.

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Apion*, ii. 19, 33, and 39.



And that devotion was also allied to all in their nature that was poor, and base, and grudging—to the spirit that heard Paul patiently until he spoke of an admission of the Gentiles to a joint inheritance, and then burst forth in the cry, ‘It is not fit that such a fellow should live’;<sup>1</sup> to the spirit that Juvenal commemorates<sup>2</sup> when he describes a Jew refusing a cup of water to a thirsty traveller, or information as to his way if he had lost it. A persecutor in heart, alternately a flatterer and a churl in demeanour—this was the rôle for the unfaithful steward, received into the everlasting habitations of the debtors of his Lord.

We can understand as we dwell on that thought how the Teacher broke off after describing the endeavour of the steward to ingratiate himself with those who could receive him into ‘everlasting habitations,’ and left his ultimate fate unspoken. Perhaps we may understand, too, why He turned to His disciples as He uttered this fragment of a parable. He knew that they, and their successors, were to succeed to the stewardship that had passed from Israel. Were they to exercise it more honestly? Alas, history answers with faltering lips. The very emphasis with which the protest of an Ambrose against the crime of a Theodosius is recorded by Christian historians shows how rare and how timid was Christian assertion of a debt when the debtor was mighty. It is thought a wonderful thing that a Bishop, addressing an Emperor fresh from massacre, should not hasten to copy the unrighteous steward, that he should not at once find excuses for an Imperial sinner, and admit to the mysteries of Christian worship one whose hands were dyed in innocent blood. If the Saviour, looking along the vista of ages, saw that on the Christian, too, as on the Jew, that verdict was to be pronounced, ‘Thou mayest be no longer steward,’ we may read in His only recorded sarcasm an anguish deeper than that of Calvary. It may be that the verdict has gone forth, that the Christian is called on to give an account of an unfaithful stewardship where the trust has been far vaster than that committed to the Jew, and that the religion which has excused the sins of the powerful has to

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Sat.* xiv. 103. 4.

make way for some revelation of the will that Christ came to manifest, unsullied by association with the errors and crimes of Christians. It is possible that we are entering on a period when the scorn of men of intellect for Christianity shall recall the scoffs of a Cicero or a Juvenal for the Jew. But let us not think that we atone for the sins of the past by flattering a mob instead of a monarch; or deem that we reverse our errors when we merely change their objects.



## BROTHERS

I HAVE taken the title of what I think the most interesting novel<sup>1</sup> published lately because the idea there worked out seems to me to suggest a scriptural study full of instruction. The novel contains the picture of two lives, one a career of uniform success, the other of uniform failure, and the reader is taught to feel that the best of life is with him who fails. The highest value of fiction lies in its power to take up the revelation of life where biography stops short. No biographer could tell a story of this kind. The history of those intimate relations which reveal the soul are necessarily either hid from him or hid by him. Whatever we are to think of an intimation given in the novel I refer to that the relation of the two brothers which forms the theme of the story is not mere fiction, we are led to find the record of much experience, in some transformed form, in this sketch of the problems, the difficulties, the disappointments, and the unexpected consolations of brotherhood. In the book we are supposed to know best these problems and their varied forms of solution are presented with supreme force and illumination, but the veil of a partial and superficial familiarity is over all, and we find it hard to pierce. Let us make the attempt.

The picture of brotherhood given in the Old Testament is certainly an unfavourable one. It represents the rivalry and jealousy of kindred, though not without indication of its enduring bond. Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, all are foes. We might pursue the suggestion into the New Testament to a certain extent. The brothers of Christ had, it appears,

<sup>1</sup> By Horace Annesley Vachell.

no reverence for Him, and in the only pair of sisters we hear of a touch of jealousy appears to emerge. And it seems to me that in the best known parable of the New Testament, where another Elder Brother is supposed to nourish in his heart those emotions of wrath which led Cain to murder, this root of difficulty in kindred relation is in part explained. The story of the Prodigal Son gathers up the meaning of the story of Cain, but before turning to the explanation let us take in the full meaning of the problem, as far as we can do so from the fragmentary form in which it is presented to us; filling it out by this comparison with other pictures of brotherhood in the Old Testament of which the story of Cain may be considered the prelude, and the story of the Prodigal the divine and illuminating conclusion.

In the great constellation of poets which shone on our England in the early part of the last century two were attracted by the story of Cain. Byron and Coleridge have both treated it. Coleridge, in a slight prose sketch written for one of those Keepsakes which we are surprised to find containing here and there works of genius; Byron in what he called a *Mystery*, a name given to those representations of scriptural history which made it familiar to our pre-Reformation ancestors, and of which we have a survival at Ammergau. The drama had much effect on me when I read it in early youth, at a time when the Old Testament presented to my mind with nothing but painful problems, and anything that tended to upset the idea of its ultimate authority or guaranteed accuracy as a record of the dealings of God with man, was welcome. I hated the idea of the Lord having accepted the sacrifice which was commemorated, as Byron says, by—

‘The fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood  
The pain of the bleating, desolated mothers  
Still yearning for their offspring,’

while He rejected the sacrifice which gave no pain to any creature and yet was just as much a giving up of something valuable. And I was also vehemently opposed to much of the shallow reasoning on the meaning and purpose



of evil which Cain is there made to repudiate, and felt all that satisfaction in its destructive force which very young people do feel in what is destructive. Returning to it after an interval of nearly fifty-six years, I find my estimate of the poem less changed than I expected. I still think it a grand and powerful conception, and even venture to consider that it bears the neighbourhood of *Paradise Lost*, a judgment which may at least be excused by quoting Sir Walter Scott's audacious decision that 'Byron has here certainly matched Milton on his own ground.' It was written in the year 1821 amid the pine forests of Ravenna and in the neighbourhood of those magnificent Mosaics, setting forth some part of the history of the Chosen Race, of which we may imagine some of the influence to have fallen on Byron's page. Justinian and Theodora find their place among the prophets of Hebrew grandeur, and may have helped to emphasise to his mind the influence of a narrative which seemed to him to set a narrow, selfish tyrant on the supreme throne. Hence we have in the drama that spirit of revolutionary vehemence which made Byron the European poet of his age. He takes Cain as an incarnation of the spirit that questions, that sympathises everywhere with the victim, that regards all authority with suspicion. Abel, and all the rest of the family of Adam are made what we may call in modern language pious Evangelicals, and the murder is a sudden frenzied blow struck in a moment of passionate protest and repented in the next. Byron never conceded that the poem was an attack on religion. It was met by a storm of abuse, but we may be sure that he would not have dedicated it to Scott, as he did, if he had meant it to weaken faith in God. The tragedy may be regarded as a poetic expansion of a celebrated declaration made within living recollection by John Stuart Mill, and welcomed by many deeply religious persons, that he would not apply the word *good* to God in any other sense than that in which he applied it to a man, and that if there was a God who would and could send him to Hell for the refusal, to Hell he would go. The different reception given to Byron's poem and Mill's declaration is a telling landmark of the

progress of thought. The poem is only eighty-four years old; it was treated as blasphemous by churchmen like Heber, and met with some decided condemnation even from men of the world like Jeffrey. Mill's declaration was made in a book published nearly forty-one years ago (his criticism of Sir William Hamilton), and was applauded by such churchmen as Frederick Maurice and Bishop Thirlwall as a weighty expression of faith in the righteousness of God. We have travelled far from the stage of feeling when the Biblical narratives were read with a kind of reverence that blunted attention; and courage would now be needed not to deny but to assert their literal truth.

In the crucible of modern criticism the heroes of the Old Testament have been sublimated into tribes. We are invited to give a corporate existence to almost all the names which represented Biblical personage for our fathers. In this way we should have to look upon Cain and Abel as representing two stages in civilisation, the pastoral and the agricultural, and Cain the most advanced. He would be the type of the race which has ceased to wander over the earth wherever fertile pastures invited flocks and herds, and has settled down in fixed habitations, beside fields measuring the sun's path on their dial of brown, green, and gold—the race which has learned to associate the word Home with the plank hut that has superseded the tent. Between these races there seems a natural antagonism commemorated in such a word, for instance, as vagabond. The shepherd drives his flocks to pasture sown by no human hand, property has not at the nomad stage of life begun to exist. The agriculturist has worked hard to secure his harvest, the patch of ground visible from his cottage has felt his year-long toil, he calls it *his* in a sense the wandering shepherd never needed to use. The roving tribes which have not learned the meaning of mine and thine are a terror to him, dissensions between them and him are inevitable. The dweller at home dreads the vagabond. The vagabond does not know the meaning of home, he does not necessarily respect this new sense of property which has sprung up in the corn-growing race. He does not see why, if the green pastures fail, he should



not drive in his cattle among the green corn. Hence harsh and murderous reprisals, and deadly strife bequeathed from sire to son.

And then, moreover, arises another difference. There is a new sense of encouragement or discouragement in the response of the soil to the care of the husbandman. All those problems arise which are associated with our prayers, vehemently denounced, I remember, by Charles Kingsley, for fine weather. What has displeased the Lord of the seasons, that the drought has withered the harvest, or the floods rotted it? There is hardly a chapter in the Old Testament which does not bring home to our minds the strong identification to the mind of Israel of the earth's fertility and the approbation of God. Of course something of this would be true of the wandering shepherd race, but so much less that we may speak of it as a new feeling when the early tribes began to cultivate the soil, and in this sense Cain would find his sacrifice rejected in a sense that Abel would not. At any rate we must recognise in the agricultural race an advance in civilisation as compared with the shepherd race, and with that advance a growth in all that civilisation implies—a sense of rights and also a sense of wrongs—an approach to some form of public justice, a habit of legalised retribution. All these grow up with the ideal of *home*, and for wandering dwellers in tents must necessarily be faint and dim. Cain seems the spirit of advancing civilisation, Abel the nomad tribe with its flocks and herds, and between these there is of necessity hostility from the first.

It may seem to some persons that if we record any validity to this view there is nothing more to be said. We may, they suppose, take our choice between the idea of Cain and Abel as the first pair of brothers in the human race and that of a pastoral and agricultural tribe, necessarily at strife with each other; but the same story cannot be looked at from both points of view. The writer of the narrative, such objectors might urge, must have meant by Cain and Abel either two individuals, or two tribes, he cannot have meant us to mix up these views and take lessons from both. It seems a plausible objection, but it

is not to me insuperable. There was in the ancient world (as the word Israel reminds us) a sense of the unity of a race which made it natural to personify a people in a way that with us would be most unnatural. We are in constant doubt whether Isaiah is speaking of an individual or a race. The Psalms seem intensely individual, and yet if one goes through them with this alternative in mind, one finds scarcely one which unquestionably excludes the hypothesis of a corporate unity. It was not that the writers of that time had a taste for allegory, and ingeniously thought out stories in which the heroes were taken as national types, it was their natural way of thinking and speaking of a race to imagine it a person. If any one supposes that an allegory must be cold and abstract, that history, narrated through impersonation, must be characterless, then let him refuse to regard the characters of Scripture as ever representing types. He will have to pass over some mentions of Israel altogether, and he will be much puzzled when he comes to the parables of the New Testament, but still he will be much nearer the truth than one who treats the characteristic traits in such characters as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as mere literary invention, because he thinks they cannot be true of tribes and nations. No characters in Shakespeare are more definite and individual than they, and the lessons they give are all such as we may associate with persons we have known intimately for long years, or with characters in fiction which are the creation of genius.

These lessons of the Old Testament as they concern brotherhood, are on the whole in harmony with the story of Cain. Brotherhood is here represented in an unfavourable light. Parents and children love each other, and husbands and wives, but brothers, even of the whole blood, are foes. The grudge which becomes murder in Cain has its successor in the relation of Jacob to Esau, and that between Joseph and his brothers, while both these cases also exhibit the underlying strength of the bond. We have probably all seen this winter the picture, in the Watts exhibition, of the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau, the most dramatic picture, to my mind, in that noble



collection. The sympathy of the artist is evidently with the eager, impetuous savage, Esau; the cringing, conscience-stricken, shamefaced Jacob, though the spectator is made aware that like Cain, he is the more civilised of the two, is a pitiful figure. There is a touch of Joseph and Charles Surface in the picture. We feel that there stands the cheat and his victim, and we are made aware, too, that each has discovered what a wasted ingenuity was spent upon that cheat. A recent book, the *Diary of a Churchgoer*, speaks of the indignation with which the unnamed writer listened to a sermon on this incident, passing over the trick of Jacob without a word of blame, and contrasts it with another, heard many years previously in St. Mary's pulpit at Cambridge, from one who was afterwards to exhibit that courageous sincerity in a way to which, as far as we can say this of any single individual, we owe it that we can now read our Bibles as fearlessly as any other book—Bishop Colenso. He must have been a young man then, and the Churchgoer gives some quaint instances of his literal reading of the Bible, but he already judged the actions there represented as he would have judged them elsewhere, and speaks with abhorrence of Jacob's treachery. I felt tempted to wish, as I read the report of that sermon, that I had formed one of its audience. I remember the shrinking with which as a child I always heard that chapter of Genesis in church, and had to believe, as I thought, that God had taken the part of the deceiver. So persistent was the shrinking this inspired that I had left childhood and even early youth behind before I could bear to give enough attention to the story to take in the striking exhibition of justice in the whole subsequent career of Jacob, up to the hour when he tells Pharaoh that his days on earth have been few and evil. Evil indeed, but evil which is the fruit of his own treachery. The deceiver is deceived, the masquerader in the place of his brother is the victim of a masquerade in which an unloved wife is palmed off upon him, of a trick by which he mourns his best loved son as dead for the chief part of his life. The grudging and ungenerous brother is to find his life poisoned by the jealousy of his sons. There never

was a crime against brotherhood so appropriately and visibly punished as Jacob's, and in spite of Esau's great and bitter cry, it is difficult to see what he lost by it.

When we come to his sons we reach a case of the sin against brotherhood in which the fault seems at first all on one side. As we look more closely we see it is not so. The rare and beautiful lesson of Joseph's forgiveness blinds us to his youthful arrogance, but if we confine our attention to his early life in Palestine we shall feel that the dislike of his brothers was not without excuse. If it had taken a milder form that meeting in Egypt need not have been a scene of one-sided forgiveness. As it is, the elevating power of a true brotherly pardon, and an imposed test free from all selfish aim, throws into shadow that earlier phase of presumption and conceit. It is purged away in the dungeon of Pharaoh, and when Joseph seems to rehearse the part of the father in the Prodigal son there is no trace of it. But for a time we are reminded that Joseph is the son of the man who stole his brother's blessing. It is a short time, and the brother soon takes the part of a loving father. But it is a stage in his history, and we cannot forget it without loss.

The well-known quotation from the Proverbs, 'There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,' returns on the relation of brotherhood with something of the same feeling as that of these narratives in a milder form. The affection which flows in the channel of choice, the writer declares, is stronger than that marked out by the appointment of Nature. The bonds which we create are naturally stronger than the bonds we accept. Love, to be at its height, seems to demand some sort of inequality, or at least unlikeness. The strongest love we know is that of man and woman, and the contrast of age takes the place of the contrast of sex. It is one of the advantages of growing old that the attractiveness of youth is revealed to us, while we share it, we do not perceive it. But brothers have neither chosen each other nor have they any inherent contrast, such as age or sex, to make each other mutually interesting. Their love is the love of equals, and in the narratives of the Old Testament also of rivals.



Hence their temptation is to jealousy, and even to envy.

And this is true also, in its degree, of the love of sisters. It is not quite equally true, women love each other more tenderly than men do, but it *is* true, and the scene representing this in the New Testament is probably the most familiarly known in the Bible. Probably we have in our time all taken part with the useful, bustling Martha, heated over her extra loaves in the oven, and felt it a little hard that the Teacher should seem to side with the one who gave herself up to the easy and delightful occupation of listening to His words, leaving all the hard and necessary work to one who did not apparently set less value on that intercourse, according to her scope. Her part appears the more unselfish of the two, and yet there seems thrown on it a certain shadow in the answer, gentle and tender as it is, to her complaint of her sister. It is a very different treatment of the theme, but there is a common element in it. The sisters we see at the tomb of their brother are fundamentally one. There was no grudge in the spirit of Martha when she told her sister, 'The Master is come and calleth for thee.' Still that picture of the household at Bethany presents us, as vividly as any touch of Shakespeare's, with the difficulties of family life, as they are brought out by that contrasted spirit of discipleship, of religion, of friendship—whatever we are to call the spirit that chooses, as contrasted with the spirit that accepts a bond. It seems as if the consciousness of this dividing influence were a part of the anguish in the last hours of the Saviour. He recalls, in His last utterance to His disciples, the lament of the prophet Micah over the family divisions of his time, and declares with a profound mournfulness, that this is what is to come upon the world with Christianity. 'They hunt every man his brother with a net,' exclaims Micah; 'the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law, a man's enemies are those of his own house.' The passage is almost quoted by our Lord on the Mount of Olives. It might be echoed by every inspiring

teacher who has followed in His steps. Where discipleship becomes a watershed there brotherhood is always endangered, unless, as with the pairs of brother disciples, it is drawn far closer by the new tie.

The story of Cain as it stands is manifestly a fragment. When we read it carefully, even in the improved Revised Version, where alone, it seems to me, we can read it at all with any understanding, we feel as if the point were left out. The Septuagint gives us no help; it is indeed less intelligible than our Authorised Version. We do not know why or how Jehovah refused Cain's sacrifice and accepted Abel's, and ignorance of that seems a bar to understanding of the rest. We are tempted to explain the acceptance of Abel as St. Paul explained the acceptance of Jacob, as an instance of the election of God apart from any merit in the accepted or demerit in the rejected. But this is only till we read the remonstrance of Jehovah to Cain, which we shall read more intelligently if we set it beside that of the Prodigal Son's father to his elder son. 'Then went his father out and entreated him.' 'And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?' How many dim memories return as we open on either page! Faint echoes of a pleading voice in childish ears from lips that have long been cold, dim stirrings of 'those first affections,' those 'shadowy recollections,' which speak of God because they speak of what is deepest down in the heart of man—these surely are equally awakened by either story and mostly with the sad memory that they too had met with rejection. 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?' 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' There is in the last of those utterances, as compared with the first, all the expansion which we should expect in an ancient story retouched by Christ. But the spirit is the same.

The latter parable is an expansion of the other—a vast expansion, but it drops one element. There is in the remonstrance of the parable nothing corresponding with the solemn warning 'Sin lieth at the door.' The father of the Prodigal does not, in any form, say to his elder son—



‘Is your life, then, so pure?’ We are apt to hear it assumed in sermons that his discontent is something self-righteous; and it is very difficult to realise that not only is there no imputation of the kind in the page of the Evangelist, but that what is there excludes it. The first preacher I remember to have pointed this out was Frederick Robertson, and as far as I know he still stands alone in the recognition. The sermon is memorable to me as having been asked for on a deathbed soon after it was published, by one dear to me, but its interest is independent of pathetic memories. Robertson remarks that the Elder Brother is commonly taken to represent the Pharisees, and protests against the idea that it could ever be said to one who was made their type, ‘Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.’ In the half century which has elapsed since Robertson passed from this world we have escaped much superstition about the Bible, and though I think we have lost with it much that was of great price, yet it is an enormous gain to be able to lay aside this and that neat docket for some text of Scripture and recognise larger meanings in it than they can dispose of. The Pharisaic spirit, I suppose, was included in most of the warnings of the Parables, but it does not seem to me to be very appropriately represented by the Elder Brother. Christ’s indictment of the Pharisees was not that they were stern moralists, but that they were not moralists at all; they laid stress on what was trivial and neglected the weightier matters of the law; they were hypocrites, and practised the sins they condemned. Neither accusation fits the Elder Brother of the parable. We cannot say that a career of vice such as we must suppose to be that of the Prodigal Son was a matter of mint, anise, and cummin. Nor is there any sign that the Elder Brother’s indignation was tainted with hypocrisy. His brother had begun life with the determination to live independently of his father, while he had remained in the paternal home, a dutiful, obedient son, rendering the obedience which his father’s division of the property had rendered no longer a necessity, the younger meanwhile spending his life and fortune disreputably. Then

suddenly the elder son on his return from a brief absence is surprised to find that preparations are being made for a great family gathering, and learns on making inquiries that the kindred and friends are invited to celebrate the return of a profligate as if he were a hero returning with well-earned fame. The son, who has gambled or drunk away the whole of the fortune which was to be legitimately his, has returned to live upon his father and impoverish a hard-working and respectable brother; and this latter, before he knows that the return to the father's house means anything but the wish to escape from hunger, is expected to rejoice at it! Can we wonder that, like Cain, he is wroth, and his countenance falls? The father does not seem to feel either wonder or blame. 'Then went his father out and entreated him.' So good a son would hardly have refused a command, but he meets only an entreaty. The embrace to the prodigal is repeated in the boundless tenderness of the assurance, 'Thou art *ever* with me, and *all* that I have is thine.' No other answer is given to the perplexities which seem allowed as legitimate, or at least as natural, than the assertion that the rejoicing which has given offence was inevitable. It was meet, it could not be otherwise. If all that I have is thine then this joy of mine must be thine also. It is remarkable that the answer of the father might be expressed in a line from Byron's drama which he puts in the mouth of a delicately touched and beautiful character—Adah the sister bride of Cain,

'What else can joy be, but in spreading joy?'

To one who shares the joy of the Heavenly Father the question as to its limitations and its channels becomes unimportant. To feel 'this my brother was dead and is alive again,' would preclude not only grudge, but all hesitation, all perplexity, all doubt. But how hard to distinguish the prodigal's repentance from the mere recoil from wretchedness, the mere desire for a life 'cushioned with good will,' as George Eliot says, or else from the love of sensation, the taste for acting, the enjoyment of attention, the pleasure that there is in anything strongly



effective of whatever kind. The noblest nature would feel that all these things may blend with a true repentance, and that to welcome the faint germ is in fact to dispel the baleful and poisonous surroundings. It is true, but other things difficult to reconcile with it are true also, and if I rightly read the parable it expresses sympathy with the doubt of the elder brother, no less than with the repentance of the younger.

Let us turn from the guiltless to the guilty elder brother when it may also be said, then went his father out and entreated him, though the tone of entreaty has a note of warning. 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, *sin lieth at the door*. And unto thee is its desire, but thou shouldst rule over it.' How near we come there to the idea of the Tempter: Sin lieth at the door. It has not obtained an entrance—it cannot but by the invitation of him who dwells within; but it *lieth at the door*. It does not, like the Lord, '*stand at the door and knock*'; it lurks, a hidden watcher, waiting to slink in at the slightest carelessness on the part of the porter. We never see it, erect in the daylight; we feel it in an unexplained neighbourhood or presence, something which desires us, and which we feel, whenever we recognise it, we are bound to rule over. But what, we cannot but ask, is this sin of Cain's which thus manifests its baleful influence in a rejected offering? We are not told, any more than we are told how the rejection of his offering was manifested. It is very unlikely that the story was originally so fragmentary and allusive; we must read it as a torn letter, rescued from the flames by an afterthought and needing the reader's ingenuity as well as his attention. How much of the Bible reaches us in that form! How much of life does! What clouded a career up to that point pure and radiant? or what emancipated a career up to that point shackled and clouded? what was it that ended a friendship or an enmity?—all these are questions we may have to leave unanswered, even though they concern our dearest. Sometimes they cannot tell us, and sometimes they cannot tell themselves. The deepest, the most poignant repentance I ever knew

in the mind of another, was to my mind utterly inexplicable. I could not, after I had heard all there was to hear, see what there was to repent of. Whenever I recall it I have to realise afresh that our life is hid—that we may know all that can be told of the actions of other men, see all that can be seen of them not only with the outward eye but with the apprehension of the logical understanding, and yet not know what in the eyes of the agent those actions truly are.

But what if we take Byron's point of view and suppose that Cain had nothing to repent of? What if he could only turn indignantly from the worship which seemed so futile, from the service which seemed so unrequited, from the endeavours which seemed to lead nowhere? Surely that would not be very unlike life as we see it around us! Perhaps Cain could not accept the assurance, 'Sin lieth at the door' as any explanation of his failure, whatever it was. Perhaps he would have said, 'According to my lights I have done my best, if Jehovah rejects the offering of single-hearted devotion He is no God for me.' Here, too, we can supply illustrations from life, if life has lasted long enough. Every one whose journey here draws near its end probably has known of some sacrifice, marred by no sin that human eye could see, which has seemed to fail of acceptance with the Power that rules our lives, which has not, at any rate, met with the encouragement which we should have anticipated for all earnest sacrifice made for the love of God or man. A career is renounced for some reason prompted by conscience, it does not always appear that the scruple can be ratified by a cool dispassionate judgment, or even that it is blessed by added spiritual insight. It seems as if the disappointment of Cain were often repeated, as if the servants of God were allowed to make real mistakes, as we must judge of mistakes in this world. We seem sometimes, like the French officers in the Franco-Prussian war, furnished with maps of a country we are destined never to reach, and wanting in any such guide to that where we are to finish our course. To all such there comes in some form, doubtless, the whispered remonstrance or encouragement which met



the ears of Cain, 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?' but the acceptance seems often deferred, it is not always made clear in this world. That in such a case the countenance should not fall—that joy should not go out of a life so baffled—this is impossible. The step towards envy and hatred is not inevitable, but surprise, perplexity, vast disappointment—this must be the lot of every one who discovers, or thinks he discovers, that a sacrifice offered to the Lord has in any sense been rejected.

The great difficulty in the way of accepting this view of the story of Cain, of supposing that it represents in some form the same temptations as those of the Elder Brother, lies in the fact that it is not the view taken by St. John. He tells us that Cain slew his brother because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. John hardly seems to realise that the first evil work we hear of Cain is his crime, perhaps he took for granted that evil works must have preceded the rejection of a sacrifice, perhaps he thought that was implied in the remonstrance of the Lord, perhaps he simply assumed that whatever led up to murder must be some lesser form of sin. The writers of the New Testament referred to the Old in a very different way from what we do. They had not a convenient Bible at hand to take down and consult at any minute, and they had not the same sense of turning to a final authority. They looked back on the Hebrew Scriptures through the atmosphere of the as yet unwritten Greek Scriptures, and borrowed illustrations of their own experience and conviction from the classic writings of their nation much as we borrow illustrations from Shakespeare. St. John, in quoting the chapter of Genesis which contains the history of Cain, is declaring, 'All envy is implicit murder. It is the seed from which springs death.' He knew the lesson was to be learnt from that chapter of Genesis, and he was not careful to verify the exact logical reference of his quotation. Perhaps he remembered it in connection with a passage from the lips of his Master, which seems itself to have been spoken with some reference to the story of Cain. I will read it with such

abridgment as seems to me to bring this out clearly. 'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment, but I say unto you that whosoever shall be angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift before the altar,' as Cain did, 'and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,' as Cain apparently ought to have done, 'leave there thy gift before the altar, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' It is impossible not to see in this fragment from the teaching on the mount some recollection of the story of Cain. If St. John was remembering it in his first Epistle, we cannot say that he was not thereby led nearer its true meaning. But if he meant that this fragment from the first chapter of Genesis, taken as it stands, tells us anything about the evil works of Cain except the murder, then he was reading too much into it. We must take the story, it seems to me, as a warning against the dangers latent in the spirit of mere brotherhood—perhaps we may say against the danger of all relations that refuse to recognise their own incompleteness, that shrink from a perpetual expansion in which the bud anticipates the seed so unlike it—against the self-centre of the brother who refuses to learn from the father, who will not recognise that all earthly bonds need the touch of something beyond themselves to keep them from being, in some form or other, the channels of death.



## DE SENECTUTE

THE close of the nineteenth century is a time when influence and fame are, to a peculiar extent, the lot of the aged. No prominent figure is youthful. The leaders of our two political Parties—both the living one, and he who has just ceased at once to live and to influence public life—have both passed the allotted age of man; while their predecessor spent ten years of his most successful government as their senior.<sup>1</sup> Literature has just lost its one unquestioned representative in the person of a man of eighty-six, and Poetry retains an equally unquestionable claim to vigorous life among us, as far as now appears, only during the lifetime of two men who are both past seventy.<sup>2</sup> Even in the scientific world eminence more nearly corresponds to a late period of life than we should have expected, in a pursuit in which youth is so great an advantage. Perhaps the strongest proof of this slow development is the fact that public men are called young until they are undeniably old; so that, like George IV., in Moore's jeering verse, they may 'Come in the promise and bloom of threescore.' Sometimes the description is made in a kindly spirit; it seems harsh not to call a person young who is still insignificant, and yet has been before the public for some time, but the euphemism would be impossible, if we had many eminent men in the generation below that which is thus accredited with the interest and promise of youth. The close of our century appears to be no less the age of old men than its dawn was that of young men, and whatever the laws which ordain that some fruit shall ripen early and some late, they are markedly exhibited in the celebrities of these two periods.

<sup>1</sup> Salisbury, Gladstone, Palmerston.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning.

The fact is much clearer than its explanation, though some explanation may be plausibly suggested in many of the circumstances of our time. The Revolution was a time of rapid development. And though the influences of our own age are less simple, we may, perhaps, say that an age of advanced democracy sets up barriers against the emergence of youth into public notice,—at all events, into political life. No biography of our own day will record the offer of a Peer to bring a young man into Parliament, and the conditions under which he can succeed in making himself audible to the present electorate, are not, under ordinary circumstances, attainable in early life. Nor do we think the scope of this observation is confined, as much as may appear, to the field of politics. However, the discussion of this question would lead us away from our present object, and it is enough here to note the fact that some influences of our own time, whatever they be, keep back the tardy fruit, and set us looking, like the school-boy in Landor's graceful verse, for 'the dubious apple in the yellow leaves.' Such an epoch seems one specially suited for considering the advantages of a time of life of which the disadvantages are obvious. That dim sight, dull hearing, weakened powers of locomotion, and failing memory are evils, all must allow; nay, we must concede that long before we receive such telling notice that our mansion here is getting out of repair, and must be shortly abandoned, we have parted with some of the attractiveness and interest of life. We have lost its store of infinite possibility. We know, and our most partial friends and kindred know too, that there are powers and excellences, once hoped for, that are as much beyond our reach as the achievements of genius; we feel ourselves hemmed in on all sides by walls, partly of our own building, but not, therefore, destructible by us, which make our plot of terrestrial seed-ground look very small, in contrast to the vast estate we portioned out so short a time ago. What can be said for the time of shrinking hopes and growing regrets, of failing powers and increasing difficulty?

We may plead, on the threshold of our apology, that



the advantages of the last half of an average life have been obscured by the fact that in fiction Old Age has been consistently and unscrupulously libelled. People who have passed thirty have no vocation or purpose, according to those subservient caterers for youth—the writers of plays and romances—but to watch over the interests of their juniors. Any interest in life for its own sake, any plan that has reference to one's own pleasure, one's own instruction, one's own improvement, becomes absurd, almost indecent, as soon as youth is past. The *Alcestis* of Euripides may be taken as a fair type of all its successors in this respect, and we must confess to a considerable sympathy with the old man who is the object of such stinging and bitter reproaches because he is not eager to give his life for his son. Biography does something to correct the misrepresentations of its seductive sister, but creeping after her with laggard steps, like the Litæ after Ate, can hardly hope to gain the ear of more than a tithe of those she has deluded, or to make an equal impression even upon those. Worst of all, even in the life of persons whose history will never form the theme of the biographer the false theory has taken root, and shows itself in a phraseology adjusted to the views of these abject and powerful flatterers of the young—a phraseology, confined, it is true, to one-half the human race, and confined to their speech. A woman past forty, we observe, never wishes to avoid even small-pox or fever for her own sake; it is always assumed, and often stated, that her sole motive in not putting herself in the way of these inconveniences is that she might not convey contagion to some young relative. It is possible that this abjuring of all interest in one's own welfare is not so untrue on the lips of most women as it would be on those of most men, but we should be much disappointed if we expected the most unselfish of our friends to act up to a declaration, made without conscious insincerity, that 'for oneself, of course, one would not care, but the young creature with one has to be considered.' The French aristocrat who took the part that Pheres refused, and went to the guillotine for his son on being mistaken for

him, did not feel, probably, that the action cost him nothing; nor could there be a worse preparation for the self-sacrifices which are actually demanded from the old, than the theory that old age makes sacrifice easy. However, perhaps this is not a very dangerous form of the heresy we would suppress, and as it is one which seems to give the heretics much satisfaction, it may be thought harsh in an essay on the advantages of old age to denounce it further.

We have not, however, finished our indictment against literature. It is not enough to say that fiction is guilty and biography feeble, we must carry our complaint even into that domain of the essayist where alone an exhibition of sound doctrine might be hoped for. The one immortal essay on Old Age is rather a dissertation on its needlessness than on its privileges. 'We must struggle against old age, as we do against death,' says Cicero. The bitter wind that disrobes beech and elm of their mantle of gold and amber is not so hurtful to the beauty of the waning year, as that precept to the beauty of the waning life; and we find it difficult to forgive the eloquent preacher for having associated with the stately music in which he sets forth the hopes of the aged man, so false and impossible an ideal of his duties. No remnant of antiquity, so much as the 'Cato Major,' shows with equal clearness at once what Christianity brought mankind, and what it found among them. Nowhere are those yearning desires, which transcend the grave, set forth with a nobler simplicity and earnestness; and if the day is, indeed, about to return when they must be confessed with the same sense of temerity, we may, as the years advance, recur with a peculiar emotion to the declaration of a Heathen that he is transported with joy at the approach of the bright day that shall bring him to the gathering of heavenly souls, whither his dear ones have fled before him. But nowhere, in any expression of antique feeling with which a modern is equally in sympathy, are we so much impressed by the absence of all that makes up one side of our ideal of moral beauty. The recipient spirit which confers the grace alike of childhood and of old age appears



mere weakness even to a sympathetic and humane citizen of old Rome. One hemisphere of goodness was as much shrouded from his eyes as one hemisphere of the moon, and he has little to say of the time when the other grows dim except that it need not grow dim so soon as we fancy. He thinks that old age should be the culmination of maturity, that the lamp should burn with a steadily increasing brightness till its extinction, that no part of life should be so little like its dawn as its twilight. Ah, how entirely is the grace of old age missed by one who seeks to strip it of all that is characteristic of itself!

To begin an eulogium on Old Age by an admission that fiction presents it with the colouring of unjust depreciation, and that history inadequately corrects the misrepresentation, that the language of ordinary life in one-half the human race adjusts itself to this view, and that the great moral writer who has made it his especial theme seems to dissipate those terrors with which he allows it to be encircled only by the pleading that the exertion of those qualities which it destroys may hold it at bay altogether: this may not appear a hopeful undertaking. And yet the truth is that many of the conventional characteristics of youth and age—or at least, of later life—should often be exchanged for each other. Youth is often listless, aimless, vacant, a mere hovering on the outside of life. Age (extending the word to include all life past middle age) is sometimes vivid, intense, crowded with interest and hope. Elderly men and women (outside the pages of a novel) may still feel a keen interest in the issues of life for their own sake, and wake up to new interests and new hopes, which are stronger than the old ones. A man fails in his profession,—the disappointment and the mortification throw a chill gloom over the morning of his career, and a large part of its afternoon; but as old age draws near other interests steal upon him; he wakes up to discover that life has unsuspected stores of warmth and pleasantness, and he dies a happier man than his successful rival. Something of the kind is true, again, at times, of an unsuccessful marriage. The chemistry of human relation is so mysterious, that we can never say

that the time is past at which two may not become one. Sometimes a great calamity unites two hearts that have beat for a lifetime in married separateness; sometimes devotion, apparently unfelt for years, seems rewarded in a moment; sometimes we can only say that a new breath has passed over the two lives, and they blend under its influence. Nowhere is the meaning of the parable of the labourers in the vineyard more fully realised than in the tardy, and yet sudden, changes of human relation. The summons to that which makes the life of life may come at the eleventh hour, and confer a boon which, in its satisfying fulness, shall be indistinguishable from that which is the recompense of a lifetime of well-earned success.

These remarks apply rather to the fictitious brilliancy attached to youth, than to the fictitious shadow cast on age, but the two are part of the same delusion. And yet, in some respects, the advantages of youth are also the advantages of age. We have allowed ourselves to apply the misleading epithet of 'second childhood' to a condition that is as unlike childhood as possible, but the later stages of life correspond in many respects to its earlier ones. What we miss, in the noonday of our career, is that definiteness of relation which enriches alike its morning and its evening. It is not the selfishness of human beings which keeps them separate, so much as their blindness to each other's needs. The simplicity of the claim of childhood is a great part of its beneficent influence. Life takes its start in relation; the father and mother, brother and sister, make up the world of the child; he is the constant recipient of service that he must accept, and of direction that he must follow; and where the ideal of childhood is not flagrantly outraged, the mere position in which he stands to his parents is enough to supply all that life needs of duty and of hope. And something of the same kind may be true, and often is true, of the end of life. The distrusted heir, who has read in the grudging looks of father or uncle the constant question of Henry IV., 'Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair?' finds that a time is come when his is the hand most willingly accepted, when his eyes are permitted to do duty



for those that are grown dim, and when jarring views and incompatible tastes give way to the blessed simplicity of service. It is the absence of all sense of this opportunity which is so marked in the treatise of Cicero. He knew well the influences of weakness on the baser side of our nature. 'Every offence is more keenly felt when it is combined with infirmity,' is one of those sentences, at least in the terseness of the original, which recur to one as summing up years of experience. But he knew not that the influences which quicken distaste are capable of a ready inversion, by which they bear us far beyond the reach of distaste; he knew not how readily the pole of the magnet might be changed, and the object of revulsion might become the object of reverence. This is the great revolution which we may or may not connect with Christianity, but which all must recognise as separating us from one who lived before Christ. We have learnt to know the might in all things feeble. We know the power of dependence. For us, even the nature that has not much other charm becomes attractive, if once it accepts the feebleness and the dependence of advanced life. Only the endeavour to conceal or defy weakness can baffle that reverence for weakness which has become an instinct of humanity.

To regard Old Age as a period of regret is the same kind of illusion as to suppose that distant hills are blue. We must pass through much regret before we reach old age, no doubt. It would be too much to assert that no life ever fulfilled all that it seemed to promise, and there are some lives, perhaps, that fulfil much more; still, on the whole, there are not many who would deny, in looking back on life, that it has been both more painful and more futile than they expected. It has brought much they did not venture to hope for, but it has withheld more that they made almost sure of. To wake up to the fact that our life is to be a poorer thing than we thought it would be, is a dreary experience, but it is passed long before we reach the close of our career. The main circumstances of life have then been accepted as a part of the scenery through which the pilgrimage has lain. Its mistakes

have borne fruit, but the fruit has been less bitter at last than at first, and mistake and misfortune are blended to the eye of the aged as planet and constellation on the midnight sky. Nor must this be regarded as a part of the weakness of age; it is a poor and morbid vanity that refuses to let past mistake become present misfortune, and time does for us in this respect what reason might do at once, if feeling were always under its control. We speak of course of real mistake, and not of wrong-doing,—the sense of which is a thing so hidden and sacred that one can hardly say whether it is keener at one time of life or another—and perhaps we overrate the importance of the fact that it is not likely to find much expression after a certain time of life. At any rate, it is an advantage to escape from the regrets that are wholly unmoral.

We sum up the advantages of age in trite, but yet significant words, when we speak of it as showing us the events of life under the influence of time. Time, it has been said, is no agent, but we should be driven to cumbrous and misleading paraphrase if we refused to speak of its work. The objects of the external world and the events of experience bear witness with a wonderful harmony to the softening, healing influences that come with the mere rhythm of the seasons—the mere succession of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. As we wander over a ruined castle, and reflect that where the ivy flings its shining mantle and the wallflower lavishes its gold was once a charred and blackened mass, speaking only of the horror of massacre and conflagration, we have a type of the change that comes over much experience, as we look back upon it through the vista of years. It is not merely that all things are brought into proportion, though this is much. We should be startled, even at a time of life when youth is past, if we could look into the future, and see how changed an aspect would be taken by those events which seem to leave all their neighbourhood blackened and charred. We should refuse to believe in the wonderful transmuting power which is measured by the beat of the pendulum and the great clock of the heavens, and which, at times, seems chronicled by moments and defied by



years. It is not that these things grow dim. That is often true, no doubt, but we would not reckon the loss of feeling among the advantages of old age. It is not that we feel the great emotions of life less in age than in youth, but that we feel rather their meaning than their mere poignancy. A change has come over our apprehension of them, and the far-off storm reaches the ear as music. The antithesis between pain and pleasure is often lost; we turn coldly from days in which every moment seemed golden as it passed, and seek to revive every moment that, as it passed, seemed a barbed dart. This is not a description of all recollected experience; there is some pain that never loses its painfulness. But it is true of much that we could not believe time had any power to transmute, till we have left it far behind us.

We have lately set before our readers the striking and eloquent passage in which Mr. W. R. Greg contrasts the different colouring taken by the hopes of the future beyond the grave, in youth and age, and seems to allow that as it comes nearer, it is the less ardently desired. The desire of the old man, he would seem to imply, is not for a fresh start amid new conditions of being, but simply for a blank of all exertion and suffering. We wonder in writing that passage whether he remembered the closing words of the *De Senectute* with their ardent anticipation, their thrill of confident hope. Perhaps he would have said that they are not the utterance of the person in whose lips they are placed, but of one who was destined to know nothing of old age; and that were the actual Cato speaking instead of the dramatising Cicero, we should not hear anything of those yearning desires which must have remained with all readers as the most stirring of all Heathen testimony to the impulse within us that points to immortality. It is true that Cicero wrote in the fulness of a maturity which he deemed that a resolute energy of will could render coeval with life, and his thirst for 'the life which alone deserves the name of life' affords no testimony that that longing is characteristic of the last period of our sojourn here; nor is it from the lips of the aged that the hope receives

much encouragement, in ordinary circumstances. As death draws near, men become disinclined for any contemplation of the experience that lies beyond it; they are weary, and shrink from every effort that involves emotion, even if the emotion be one of joy. And yet surely recollections must be present to the minds of most of our readers of some old age which they could least adjust to the belief that the end of this life was the end of all life,—of the closing years of some long career that affect the ear of memory like a noble modulation bringing in a new key, and inevitably suggesting a much richer melody than that which it opened in this world. As the windows were darkened, and the grasshopper became a burden, and as desire failed, have we not all witnessed a revelation of new possibilities, within a character long familiar, rendering the notion that it should *cease to be* as impossible as that a picture to which we have seen the master-hand setting its last touches was just about to be committed by him to the flames? It is in the memories bequeathed by old age, no less than in the visions of childhood, that we find a glimpse of those

‘Obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings,  
Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in worlds not realised ;  
High instincts, before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble, like a guilty thing surprised.’

We must not look for these in conscious utterance; the time for anything requiring so much effort is in earlier life, when the spirit can face emotion and the intellect retains its spring. But they will come to the eye that has watched the evening of mortal life in memories of new patience, new tenderness, new strength, when all outward sources of strength were drying up. They will linger as a lesson of courageous hope not only for the shortening future that is bounded by old age, but for one of which they have helped us to regard many an old age, in its newness of harmonious beauty, as the almost audible promise.



## THE DRAWBACKS OF THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE

WHILE the advantages of intellectual pursuits have been set forth so often that any attempt to enumerate them must pass over trite ground, and arrive at conclusions which will fail to rouse a single dissentient voice, the drawbacks of these pursuits seem to us inadequately recognised, and there are special reasons in the circumstances of our own day why they ought to be recognised. The reader, we hope, will not misunderstand an attempt to fill this gap for any depreciation of the intellectual life. It is surely a good thing to remember that when you are going towards the north, you must not expect the productions of the south. We do not depreciate the science of a great mathematician, when we say that he is not likely to be an authority on some recondite matter of history. As little ought we to be supposed to depreciate the common ground of the mathematician and the historian in urging that it has limits, and that some good things lie beyond them.

Indeed, it is a part of the condition of things, in this tangled and imperfect world, that whatever shuts out much evil must shut out some good. Just as we know the outline of any opaque body if we know the shape of its shadow; the main characteristic of the intellectual life—its power of arresting emotion—may be regarded as advantage or disadvantage, according to our point of view. If we regard it in its influence on sorrow, and confine our attention to its lower stages, this influence will appear as great and unmixed gain. It is a great advantage to a lawyer who has lost his only child, that it is as impossible

for him to feel any keen grief while he is making up his mind as to the legal aspect of a quarrel, as it is to be in two places at once; and it is a great disadvantage to his wife that she may carry on this keen grief through almost everything she does, except her household accounts,—a difference which should not be confused by saying that he is busy and she is idle. That may or may not be true, but it is usually true that his occupations shut out sorrow, and hers admit it. It is so great a privilege to hold the key which shuts out sorrow, that we naturally suppose it unmixed gain. But advantages in this world are not pure in proportion to their importance. Perhaps this quality of the intellect would be pure gain, if emotion were only arrested as much as a bereaved father's sorrow is arrested by his daily work; but we are here considering the life of the head at its lowest stage, and the life of the heart at its highest. And there is no doubt that if the ardour of the intellect be intensified, and the claim of the sorrow be diminished, feeling may be suppressed altogether. If, for instance, a person is absorbed in some profound speculation, which he is on the verge of conducting to a successful issue, there are many sorrows which he is, for the time, incapable of feeling at all. No doubt a great calamity would lay its hands upon him, and thrust his occupation aside, and it is even possible, though not, we think, very likely, that a nature capable of profound speculation might, under this powerful grasp, find its whole energy converted to suffering, and excel others as much in grief as in mental achievement. But it is clear that no second-rate sorrows could do this. The man of science turns from a letter announcing the death of his dearest friend to some interesting experiment, and forgets the loss in watching it, even if afterwards and before he feels it keenly. There is nothing wrong in this; in its measure it is valuable, but it keeps the springs of the moral nature low. It makes a man's experience less human. The thinker resembles a dweller in some region liable to earthquakes who should always have a balloon ready for escape. He dwells amid shocks from which his refuge is always accessible, he never fully shares the condition of those who must see



their homes shattered round them, and be mutilated or buried in the ruins.

There are, moreover, some influences which tend to conceal this limitation from himself, and still more from those around him. We are all, great and small alike, apt to mistake thoughts about life for life, to think we have experienced what we have understood, that we have felt whatever with the mind's eye we have clearly seen. Yet the lessons we receive against this mistake, though not, perhaps, very common, are emphatic enough. Few persons have come very near a great moral teacher without being forced to realise that the life of thought and of reality were distinct things, and even, in some degree, mutually hostile. A welcome chance, let us suppose, allows us to approach one whose writings have filled us with aspirations that would, if they retained their first vividness, enable us to feel our fortunes rocking beneath us as carelessly as the bird spreading his wings on the bough. We naturally, but most unreasonably, expect from this approach to the fountain of so much new life, a second influx of its first invigorating power. We think that the teaching already conveyed in words will be repeated now, in a more impressive form, and suppose that one who has led us upwards, by pointing to ideals glimmering above us in radiance and beauty like Alpine summits, must himself be qualified to guide us along the rocky path that leads towards them. We might just as well expect him to have strong legs because he has keen sight. Nay, we might do so with rather less probability of being disappointed. Keen sight, though it does not imply a vigorous bodily frame, does not imply the contrary. We cannot say this of the moral vision, as we are now considering it. Even if the only difference between our teacher and other men were that we should look at him against the white background of his own ideal, the small moral uglinesses which we should pass over in another man would inevitably be greatly exaggerated, but it is greater than this. While they have had the whole energy of their nature at leisure for action, a large part of his is already spent when he enters their world. Force has gone out of him in con-

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ceiving and uttering moral ideas, and enough may not remain to work them into life. Strange that what is a truism in physics will seem to many a paradox in morals!

There is another aspect, closely allied to this, of our tendency to misconceive the thinker, on which we should like to say a word. We mean the manner in which ordinary persons are liable to exaggerate the sympathy of genius. Probably most of us would be thought to have acquired an almost miraculous increase in the power of sympathy, if it were suddenly given us to express what we actually felt. How little we can look back on any crisis of life, and feel that we said what we meant! Even when we understand the misfortunes of those dear to us, how confusedly and blunderingly we endeavour to make them feel this, perhaps insulting a proud nature by pity, or humbling a weak one with advice available only by strength! Now think what it would be to have no more than the supply of human feeling possessed, we may roughly say, by all of us, and to be able adequately and immediately to express it. The nearest approach to such a state of things is to imagine either that every sufferer is a dear friend, or else that we see the sorrows of our fellows at once as we see them after the discipline of long, painful years, and deal with them in experience as we desire to have dealt with them in memory. Now genius enables a man to do this, and much more. He can realise incompatible and unfelt sorrows as we realise the few sorrows we have felt, and (which is an important part of the necessity) have ceased to feel, and he can also express what he does feel. We need a very peculiar training in order to understand anybody as a man of genius understands everybody, and then a peculiar gift to put our understanding into words. We do not think it is possible to avoid misconceiving such a power. The humblest recipient of the sympathy of genius is liable to mistake the peculiarity of its own quality for the peculiarity of his attraction for it—to suppose that with an imaginative thinker, as with himself, a little sympathy given, means a great deal in reserve. But the very fact



that a great poet realises the sorrows of those with whom chance throws him into contact, as the sufferers could only realise the sorrows of a beloved friend, or of one whose experience was lighted up by their own,—this very fact shortens the sympathy it so wonderfully intensifies, for he flashes his insight on my life at this moment and on yours the next, and mine must be dark, if yours is to be illuminated. Do not let us be ungrateful for that brilliant illumination, because it is also brief. It is well to have been admitted to a palace, but we cannot expect to be allowed to take up our abode there, and those who have entered and quitted it ought to beware of making the regal spirit regret an admission that was generous, because it entailed a dismissal that was not cruel.

We may be told that in pointing out delusion in the humble guest admitted to the abode of genius, we are quitting the disadvantages of intellect for the disadvantages of want of intellect. We urge in reply, first, that this disadvantage being felt only in the presence of great intellectual power, may in some sense be regarded as its shadow; and secondly, that although no one would venture to dilate upon the temptations of genius who is conscious of not possessing it, yet illusion is dangerous everywhere, and the illusion we have painted in the guest, cannot, we should think, be entirely confined to him. The man of genius himself must sometimes mistake the vivid and adequate apprehension of other lives for sympathy, and fancy that what has been reflected in his powerful imagination has reached his heart. And this, indeed, is the danger of imagination always, whether it amounts to the specific power we call genius, or merely leavens the whole nature with its richness. It must always seem to enlarge the moral power which it sets free from shackles and disguises, even though it does sometimes in this very liberation tend a little in the opposite direction.

In taking our examples of the dangers of the intellectual life from the life of an average man, and from the life of genius, we may appear to contemplate two things about as different as it is possible to conceive. But we only allude to the ordinary man's occupations so far as

they are contrasted with the ordinary woman's, and a busy man seems to us, for the purpose for which we regard him, to stand about half-way between the average woman and a man of genius. And all we desire is to extend through the whole scale of the intellectual life that kind of indulgence, if you regard it from one point of view, or caution, if you regard it from another, which you perceive at once to be necessary, if you regard it in either its most brilliant or its most ordinary illustration. Unquestionably there is a different standard for man and for woman; the claims of a common-place man would in a common-place woman be called decidedly selfish. And all who have really known a person much looked up to on account of his intellectual endowments will be inclined to say the same of him, as compared with other people. We recognise the difference without blame in the case of the two halves of humanity, because we are so familiar with it, and we do the like in the case of genius, because there the claimant is our master; but we fail to carry on this simple recognition through the intermediate stages where its necessity is just as real, and indeed, from causes on which we have no space to enter, much more pressing.

It is a loss that we have no epithet for a course of conduct that guards the interest of the self but one so much coloured by condemnation as *selfish*. A great thinker—or rather, a true thinker of any calibre—is doing far more for his kind when he takes anxious care of his health than if he were to injure it in exertions for somebody else; and indeed, you should call no one selfish for reserving his energies, till you know how he is going to expend them. At the same time, we think it is extremely dangerous for any one to have to make this sort of claim on his own behalf; and the temptation to do this must, we fear, be reckoned as the one great danger which is fully compensated for, but not annihilated, by the many and enduring blessings of the intellectual life.

We sum up the warning we desire to convey, in saying that the law that work consumes heat is as true for mind as for matter. A sensible amount of heat, Mr. Tyndall tells us, is consumed by a cup of tea in dissolving a lump



of sugar, and an intense amount of cold may be produced if the chemical work we require is proportionally great. In the moral world, unhappily, the coldness may be produced, and the work not done. He who makes the thinker's claim without doing the thinker's work well deserves the condemnation which he generally receives; but do not judge severely one who overrates his work, or at least, remember in judging him that for a second-rate intellect to discern clearly the limits inexorably set to its achievements, would sometimes be to abandon them altogether.





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